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On Our Cover: Eva Perón (Madonna) addresses the Argentinian masses in *Evita*, a musical motion picture directed by Alan Parker and photographed by Darius Khondji, AFC (photo by David Appleby, courtesy of Cinergi Pictures Entertainment, Inc. and Cinergi Productions N.V.).

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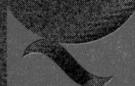
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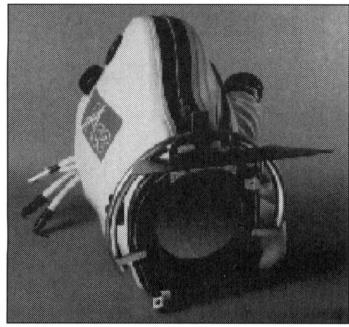


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How Clairmont sees the Moviecam SL:

Light weight is just the beginning. This is an excellent *dual-purpose* B camera. Silent-running, shares modules with the Moviecam Compact A camera. And you can switch it very quickly from studio mode to hand-held or Steadicam mode, so you don't need to rent a third camera.

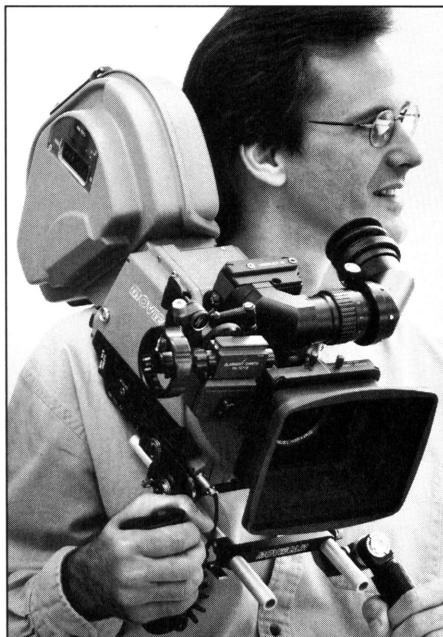
How long does it take to switch an SL from one mode to another? We timed one man making two switches; the results impressed us.

Test results:

At the top of the other page, you can see one of our SLs in full studio mode. At the bottom is an SL in Steadicam mode. We were able to switch from studio to Steadicam in two minutes, four seconds, including film threading.

We asked Moviecam for a 150° shutter setting. Here's what happened:

On the phone with Moviecam designer Fritz Gabriel Bauer, Denny Clairmont mentioned that a 150 degree position on the Compact's adjustable shutter would be useful to people shooting at 25 fps with HMI lights in 60Hz countries. It was said only once — but in our next shipment, there it was, on all the cameras. The SL uses the same *helpful* shutter.



Not long

From studio to hand-held took our man four minutes, ten seconds. Most of the extra time was spent on the left handgrip with its bracket/rods and on the follow-focus.

Not heavy

In hand-held mode, that SL weighed 23 lbs with video tap, hand-held finder, handgrips/rods, Zeiss 35mm T1.3, follow-focus, MB3 mattebox and empty magazine. In Steadicam mode, with video tap, same lens/mattebox and empty magazine, it weighed 17 lb 10 oz.

Same movement

Those are M.O.S. camera weights; but the SL is clearly a sync-sound production camera, in all three modes. It uses the same dual-pin registration movement as the Compact, it has the same adjustable shutter and it can be equipped with the same electronics.

Same accessories

Plug-in accessories provide sync with video monitors and rear projection, speeds from 2 to 40 fps and an iris motor that automatically compensates. With the Compact's viewing module on the SL, you can use the long finder and swing it over. Spherical or anamorphic. Tach and footage counter on both sides. Movieglow.

Rental package

So we see the SL as a dual-purpose B camera — and that's the way we're packaging it. The daily rate is for an SL in its basic hand-held mode. You can mount your 1000 foot Compact magazines. But if you want the Compact's viewing modules and electronics on your SL, you'll rent our studio mode kit.

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This way, you rent only as much SL as you need, when you need it. You can customize your SL's weight and its cost, from day to day. And you don't need to rent a third camera for hand-held and Steadicam shots.



Extremely quiet

How quiet is the SL? "The Compact was the lightest-weight silent-running camera in the World before the SL came along," says Denny Clairmont. "The Compact is the quietest camera I've ever met and I've met them all. The SL is extremely quiet, but not quite as quiet as the Compact."

Kiss me

Here's the rule of thumb: the SL is quiet enough to shoot anywhere except close in above a love scene where the actors are whispering to each other. For that shot, use your A camera.

In studio mode, above, viewing system and magazine are from Compact. Camera body module weighs 8 lb 6 oz.



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Letters

Restoration Redux

In reference to a letter written by Robert Harris and James Katz (AC Sept. '96), I would like to add a comment about film "preservation." As a senior video editor for Big Shot Productions, Inc. in Baltimore, Maryland, I've had direct experience with the film transfer process. I'll be the first one to admit that video in no way approaches the quality, contrast ratios and resolution that film has, particularly in the 65mm format. While that is true, I believe the process that gets the film image to video is extremely valuable in the so-called "preservation" and "restoration" of new and aging films.

First, we need to define what we mean by "preservation" and "restoration" in relation to film. While I'm not an expert in film technologies, some basic tenets are obvious even to the most naive. The term "preservation" implies that an effort has been made from the very beginning to maintain the quality of the original negative cut of the picture. It is obvious to me that a great many films did not have this treatment, a fact that has been evidenced over and over again by articles in the pages of *American Cinematographer*. The very act of using the original negative as much as 250 times in the optical transfer process clearly indicates a lack of concern by the studios.

The other inherent problem with film preservation is the film itself. Chemicals simply do not stand the test of time. Doing what is necessary for the preservation of one portion of the film substrate can damage the other components. Simply "exercising" the acetate film backing to maintain pliability can cause flaking and reoxidation of the emulsion. Inadequate flexing of the acetate results in stiffness and a tendency for the film to break, especially at the splices. A conundrum exists here.

This takes us to the next term, "restoration," which implies a return to the original state. Does anyone really think this is possible in the purest sense? The very nature of film composition,

treatment and storage time work against any full restoration. The only thing possible is an "approximation" subjectively re-created from the remaining negative. This usually involves a copy being made of the original. In any format, except digital, a copy is inherently inferior to the original no matter what the state of the initial print.

In the argument of optical versus telecine film passes, if I understand the process of optical transfer correctly, it is a great deal more unforgiving on the film than a quality telecine. Most modern up-to-date telecines do not use claws to pull and park frames for exposure. The tension on the film is minimal compared to the optical process, since the film is not starting and stopping in the gate 24 times a second. In a telecine machine, the film is allowed to pass smoothly through the gate (except in the "steady gate" process). Splices are less prone to breakage.

On the subject of splices, are there no processes that allow for the preservation of the edit point? Does opening, cleaning and reslicing not work? What about ultrasonic splicing techniques? As an editor I cannot imagine that a re-editing of the film is a viable solution to restoration! In my opinion, the very act of trimming a frame on each side of an edit is criminal, as this process affects the timing of the edit. By trimming a frame on each side, you have taken a full twelfth of a second out of the cut. This may not seem much to some, but ask any editor and you'll receive the same reaction that you have gotten from me. A twelfth of a second is a lot of time whether you are editing an action sequence, a dramatic sequence or a comedic sequence. In editing, you are not just concerned with which shot goes where and how they transition, but also with how they are timed. To alter that timing arbitrarily is just as bad as altering the aspect ratio, content and imagery of the film! Also, on a quite technical point, what do you do with the slipped audio sync?

While I agree that something

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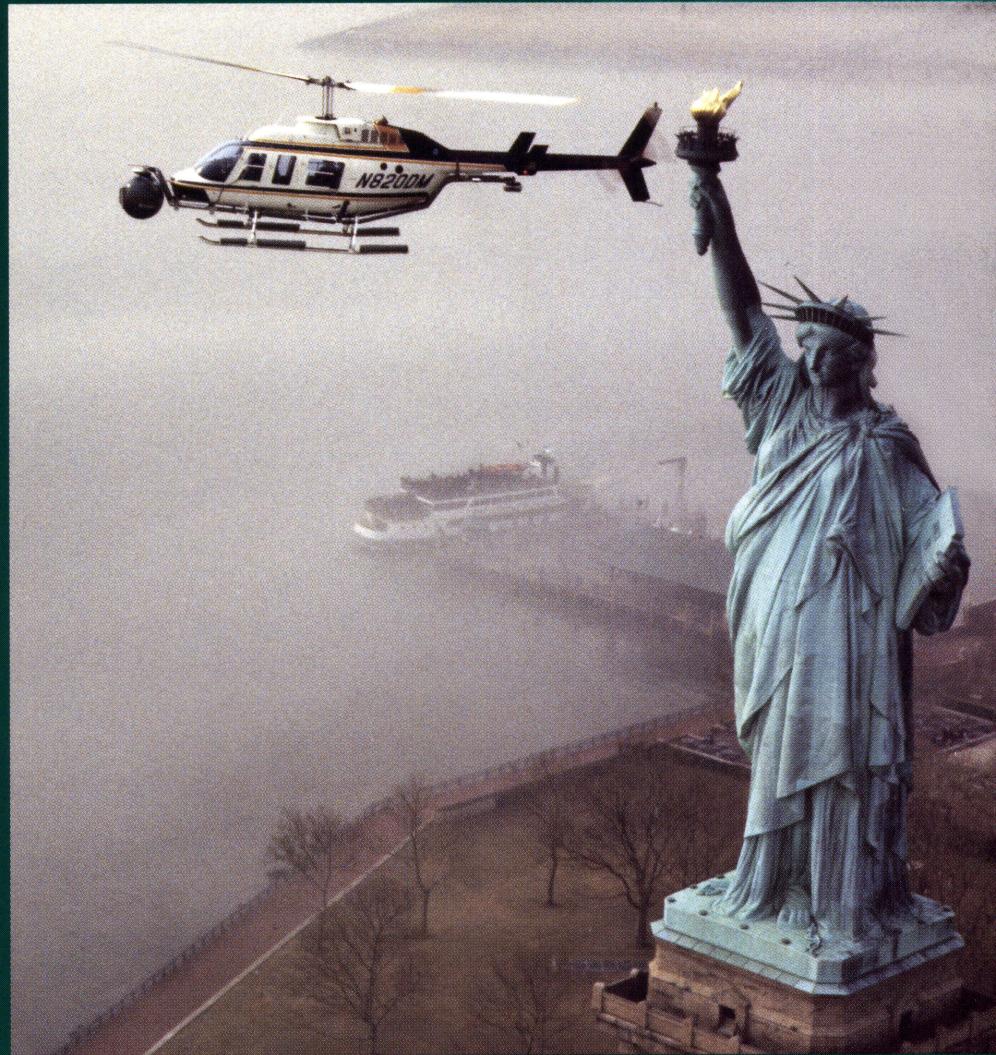
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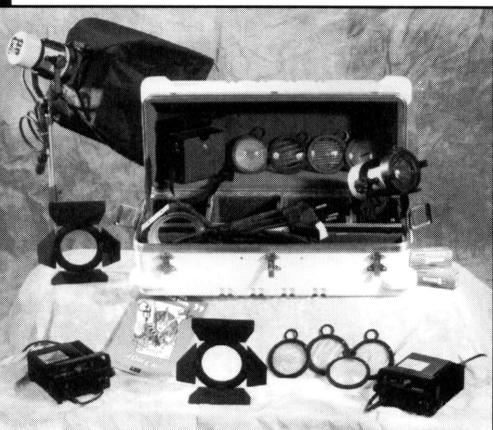
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needs to be done to "restore" these films, I do not agree with the methods prescribed by Mr. Harris and Mr. Katz. At least, I don't agree with their order of events. There are high-resolution transfer technologies now available for digital storage based on the video transfer telecine technique. One system that was mentioned just a few pages beyond their letter was Philips Broadcast Television Systems' Spirit DataCine — a system that can store frame-by-frame film images in 2,000 pixel by 2,000 pixel resolution at real-time transfer speeds! If I'm not mistaken, this is the resolution that CGI houses are currently using for film special effects work. There are other systems already on the market that do this in slightly slower than real time.

If this resolution is still not enough for the film purist, then perhaps a higher-resolution system could be adopted for preservation and true restorative work. Once an image is captured digitally, it is preserved exactly and forever as it was recorded, with no degradation. This method could be used for the preservation of both new films and so-called "restored" films. I would feel more comfortable in releasing the original negative for the traditional method of "restoration" if I knew that I had a pristine copy of the original negative — as it existed before restorative attempts — safely stored away.

Taking this a step further, this same process could be used as the first step in the "restoration" process. By now, most would agree that CGI is a proven tool in the film industry. CGI could be used in the restorative process much more effectively than any optical process ever could! If this step is taken before old films suffer any more abuse in the optical stage, they may have a better chance of outliving the next generation of filmmakers.

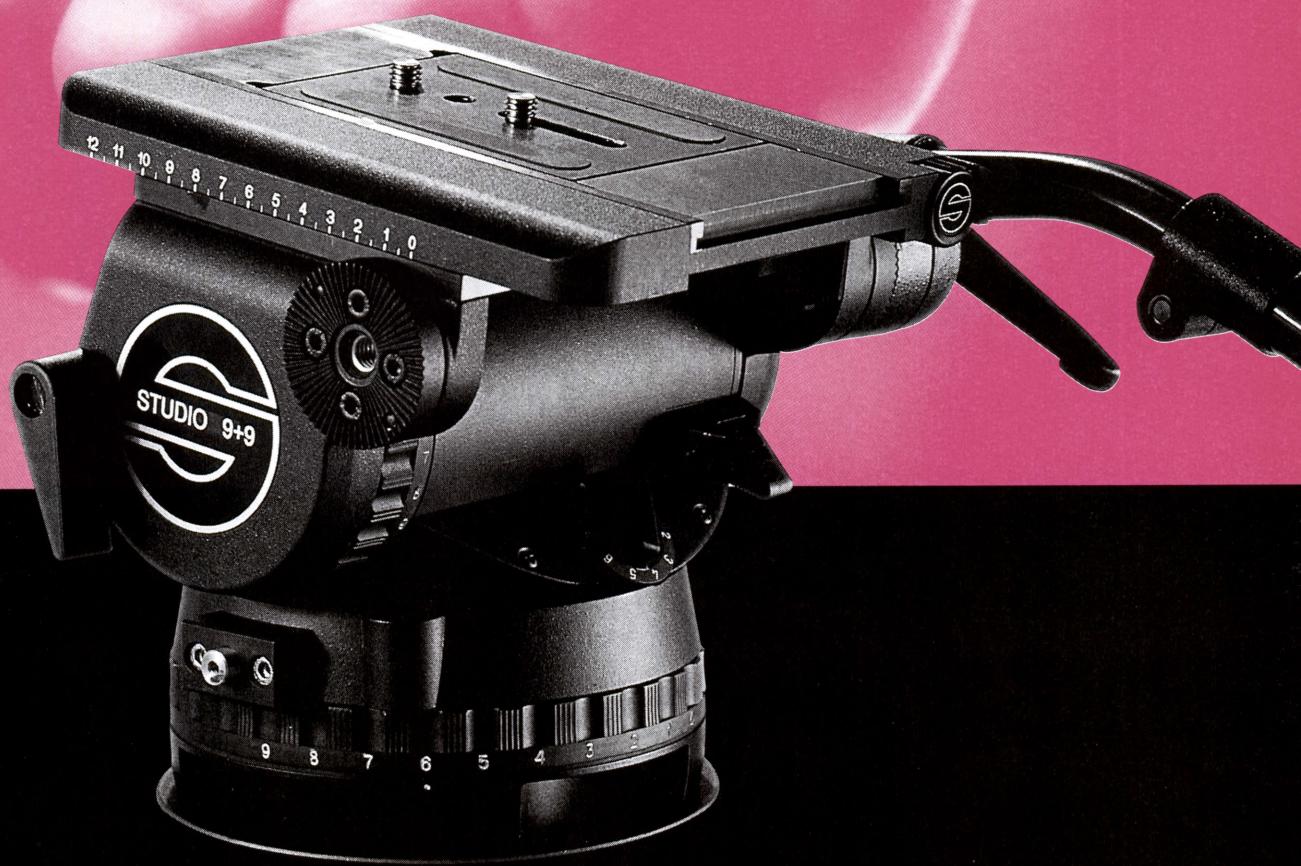
— Paul V. Markey
Big Shot Productions, Inc.
Baltimore, Maryland

Errata

In our October '96 article on Kodak's Primetime film stock ("Primetime Stock Enhances the Airwaves"), we inadvertently misspelled the name of cinematographer James Chressanthis. *AC* regrets the error, and hopes this will not have an adverse affect on our Nielsen ratings. ♦

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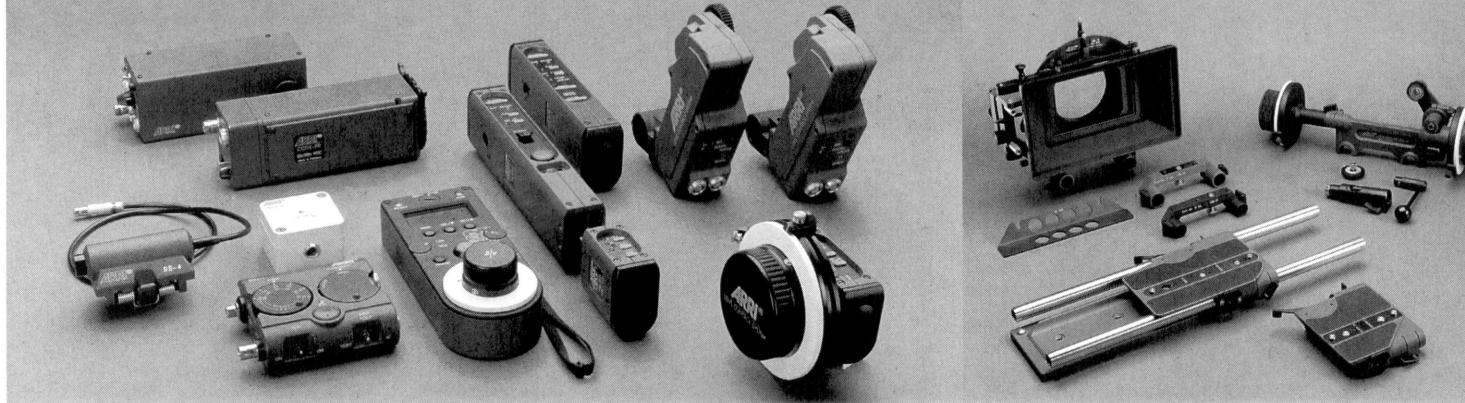
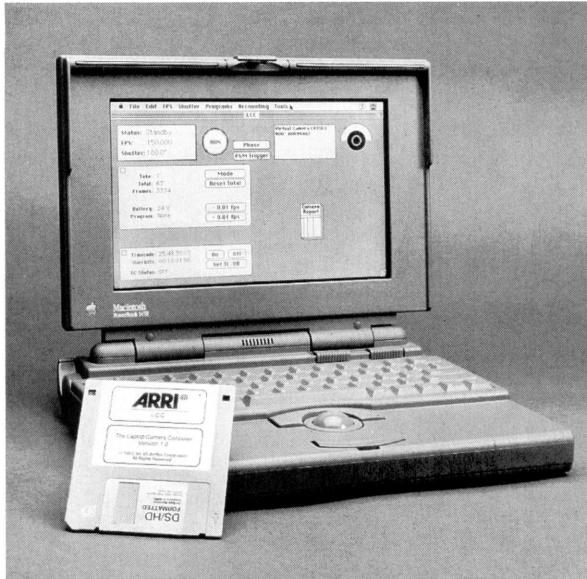
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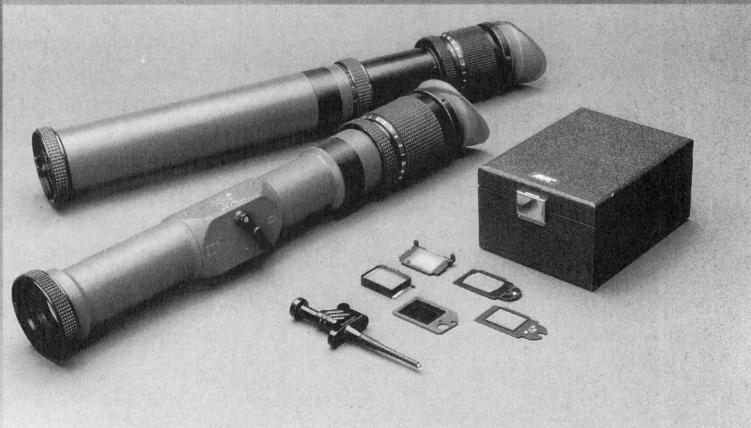
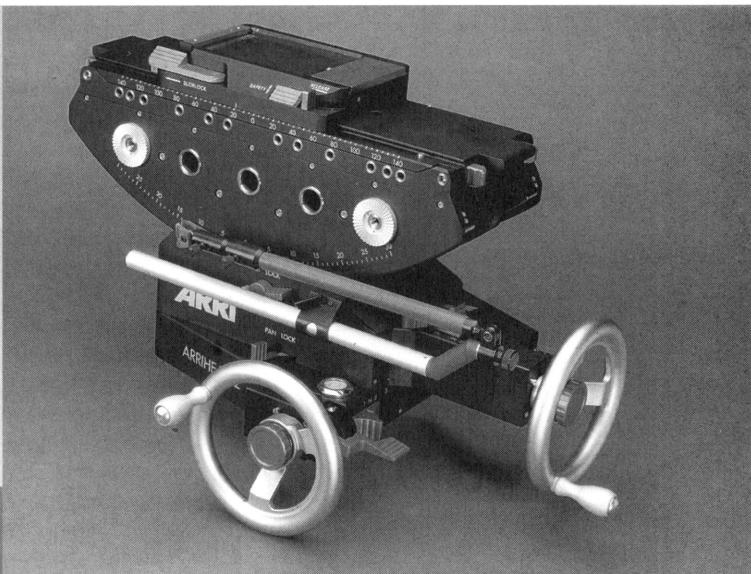
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The Post Process

New Federal Classification and What it Means

by Debra Kaufman

51213 is a lucky number — not in Las Vegas, but at your local postproduction facility. Effective January 1, 1997, it is the Federal government's new North American Classification System (NAICS) code for "teleproduction and other related postproduction industries." What sounds like a mouthful — and an esoteric one at that — translates to thousands of dollars that will be saved annually by post facilities.

How the post house got its NAICS code is also an instructive tale about the increasing interconnection between the film/television industry and federal, state and local governments. The moral of the story is that a trade association armed with resources, willpower and focus *can* change the rules.

The saga begins, fittingly enough, in Los Angeles, the epicenter of the motion picture/television industry. First, some back-story: all industries sport a federal industry classification (which, pre-NAFTA, was called the Standard Industry Classification) with widespread implications for taxation, insurance, land-use and lending. The federal classification for the motion picture industry hadn't been significantly changed since the 1930s. But with the advent of videotape and high-end computers, the postproduction industry *had* radically changed. The existing code listed the teleproduction and post industry under "Services Allied to Motion Picture Production."

"I found that the SIC code was not germane, not just with regard to government RFPs (requests for proposal) but in our relationships with banking and finance institutions, insurance agencies, and federal, state and city agencies handling taxation and land-use issues," says Eddie Ackerman, CEO of Absolute Post and a member of the

Board of Directors for the Southern California chapter of the International Teleproduction Society (ITS).

The cumbersome situation existed because under the outdated code, postproduction was lumped together with casting bureaus, makeup, set and costume construction, and film processing labs. Grouped with industries that use chemicals, are involved in manufacturing and construction, and have a higher risk of fire and injury, post facilities — which are essentially part of a clean, high-tech industry — found themselves saddled with high worker's comp and insurance rates and a hard time explaining the industry to bankers. Admits Ackerman, "My initial motivation for change was purely greed."

The first issue was equipment depreciation, and the first level of the battle took place with the County of Los Angeles. Equipment depreciation was locked into a 10- to 12-year schedule, which works with hammers and sewing machines but is a laughable time frame in the post industry, where equipment is rendered obsolete almost as soon as it's bought. The Government Affairs Committee of the Southern California chapter of the ITS drew this state of affairs to the attention of the County Tax Assessor, and in 1991, the County of Los Angeles recognized postproduction as a homogeneous group, with a more tolerable five-year depreciation schedule.

With this first battle won, the same ITS chapter aggressively targeted the Los Angeles City Business Tax, which categorized postproduction as "other," the highest taxation level. In 1993, the City of Los Angeles acknowledged the existence of the postproduction industry and doled out a \$6 million refund to affected post houses.

The changes wrought in Los



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Angeles by the Southern California chapter of the ITS were not lost upon the organization's international Board of Directors, which decided to pursue a new Federal code. With \$25,000 allocated to do so, the newly created International Government Affairs Committee hired the Washington D.C. law firm of Seyfarth, Shaw, Fairweather & Geraldson, and began to educate the ITS membership about the issue.

The chair of the ITS Government Affairs committee, Duane Thompson (CEO of California Image Associates in Rancho Cordova), as well as members Ackerman; Rob Henninger, president/CEO of Henninger Media Services in Arlington, VA; and Terry Wickre, president of WickerWorks Video Productions in Englewood, CO, presented supporting evidence to Department of Commerce official Debra Stempowski, such as an annual ITS financial survey showing that the teleproduction industry is sizeable and growing. Their figures included the eye-opening fact that independent postproduction facilities in the U.S. billed \$3.3 billion in 1995 alone. The federal government responding by granting the industry a stand-alone classification in June of 1996.

Some of the immediate benefits of this are financial. Thompson reports that the new NAICS code caused his worker's comp rates to plummet from \$1.27 to \$.49 per \$100. "That's a significant drop, and it's dollars right back into my pocket," he notes.

The teleproduction community will also be able to more accurately and closely track purchases, sales, and industry trends. The result of that, says Ackerman, will be "economic incentives for expansion of the employee-base." And now, for the first time, there will be a statistical database about the post industry, which had often been categorized with TV and radio stations. "When you can compile hard statistics, it becomes more attractive to the financial people to do business with us," he adds.

Though the new government code will have a demonstrable financial impact on post facilities (whether or not they are ITS members), the moral of the story is less about money than it is about some hard facts relating to today's motion picture/television industry.

Moral #1 is that, in today's world, government affairs count. "I think

it's significant that we're moving our headquarters from New York to Washington, D.C.," observes Thompson. "That decision was made partly to allow us to be part of the governmental [decision-making process] on technology that affects our industry. Probably one of the most significant committees you can have within an organization or guild is government affairs, because so much relies on how you address new technology. It's very important that they hear a unified voice."

That brings us to Moral #2, which is something our American history books tell us: united we stand, divided we get ignored—or worse, our interests are contravened. Because the individual post houses (or individuals themselves) are too busy doing business to change the world or even the neighborhood, it's up to the trade organization, association, guild or union to see the big picture and act for the interests of the group. That's what the ITS did, and given the current political atmosphere, it's a lesson to remember. ♦

Cinec Awards

At the 1996 Cinec conference held in Munich, Germany this past September, the following individuals were honored for their outstanding achievements and developments in the fields of motion picture technology and postproduction:

Denny Clairmont - Clairmont Camera (USA)

Henriette Dujarric - Le Technicien du Film and de la Video (France)

Dennis J. Fraser, MBE - Grip House Ltd. (Britain)

Hans Hansson - Cinematographer (Sweden)

Luc Héripert - L'idée dans la boîte (France)

Peter Hürlimann - Cinerent Technik AG (Switzerland)

Toni Ketterle - Bavaria Film (Germany)

Karl Kresser - Otto Nemenz International (USA)

Michael Samuelson - M. Samuelson Lighting Ltd. (Great Britain)

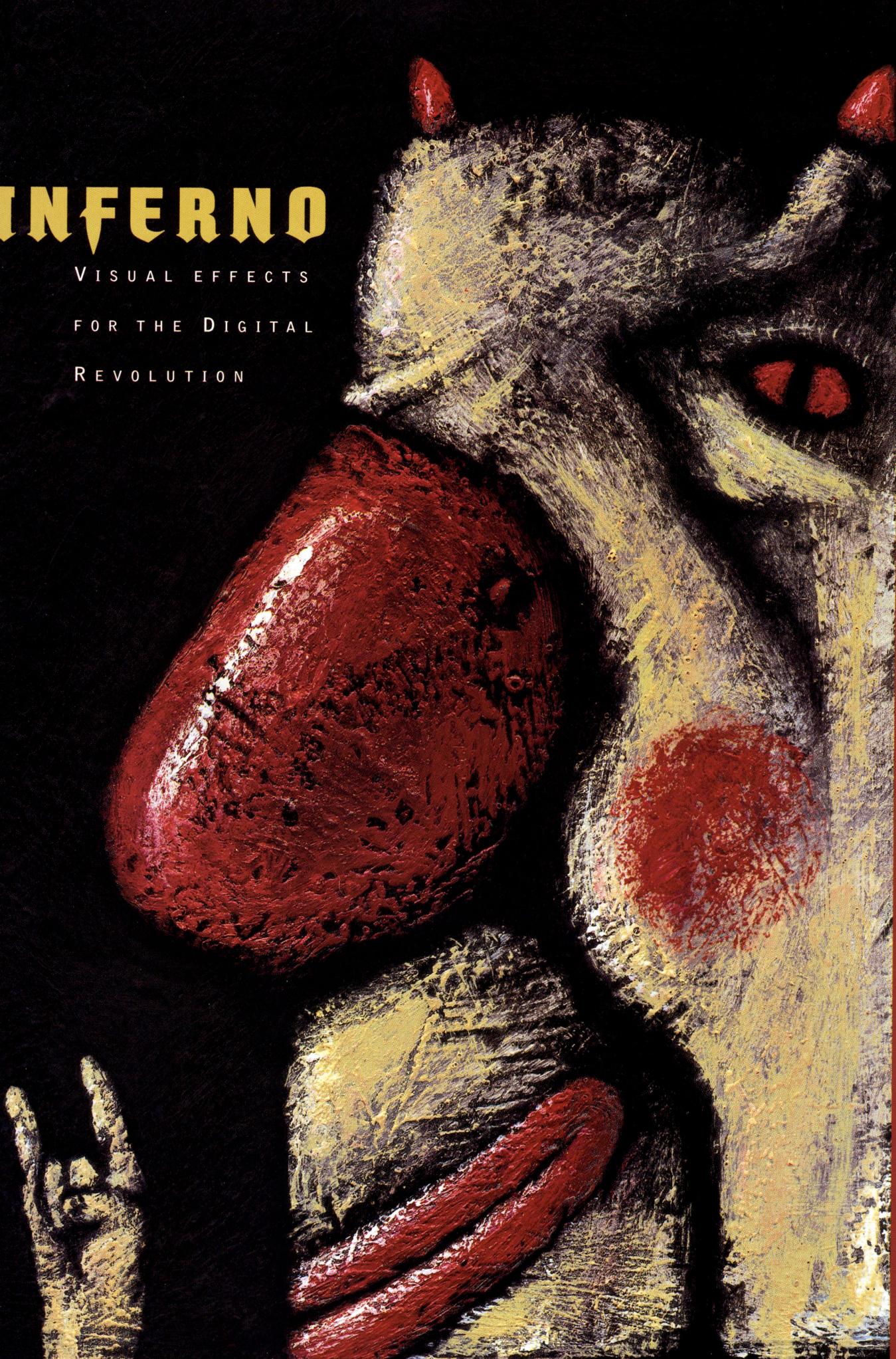
Andreas Schümchen - Medien Bulletin (Germany)

Johannes Webers - Lecturer/Consultant Engineer (Germany)

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Production Slate

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson



Above: Singer/guitarist Dave Crider leads The Mono Men through a rousing performance at Bellingham's 3-B in the "grunge rock" documentary *Hype!*. Capturing the on-stage antics is camera operator Lars Larson (at far wall). Center: Taking a brief respite from her gig as camera operator, Fastbacks guitarist Lulu Gargiulo rocks on while being photographed by cameraman Robert Bennett.

***Hype!* Documents the Grunge Aesthetic**

by Chris Pizzello

Everybody loves us/Everybody loves our town/That's why I'm thinking lately/Don't believe in it now/It's so overblown...

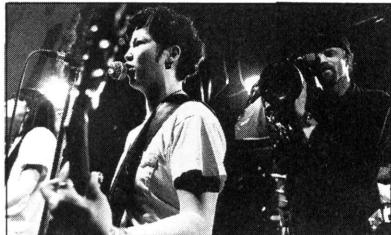
—“Overblown,” Mudhoney

A mere five years ago, Seattle, Washington unwittingly became the hub of the rock-and-roll universe, thanks to the sonic onslaught of Nirvana's anthemic song “Smells like Teen Spirit,” which almost single-handedly obliterated posturing heavy metal bands and bloated, synthetic acts from the musical landscape. Soon after the explosion of the new musical genre dubbed “grunge rock,” *The New York Times* ran extensive articles that tried to make sense of the phenomenon, while splashy magazine spreads featured models cavorting in grunge fashion: flannel shirts, wool caps and Doc Martens boots.

In the midst of this omnipresent mania for all things thermal, producer Steve Helvey conceptualized a documentary dissecting Seattle's grunge music culture. He presented this idea to Los Angeles-based director Doug Pray, who had helmed music videos for such Seattle bands as The Young Fresh Fellows and Flop. “I thought it was a terrible idea at first,” Pray admits. “The whole scene

had been so hyped by that point. Plus, you don't make a documentary about a music scene and start at the end!”

To get the Seattle music community's cooperation, the director knew the movie had to be more than a mere concert documentary. He envisioned a veritable history of the city's underground rock movement — one that would illuminate the unheralded bands that gave birth to grunge, the groundbreaking acts that launched it into national prominence, and the crass, commercial exploitation of the scene which



followed. Pray made his first trip to Seattle in 1992, only to find that the understandably media-wary music scene was not an easy world to infiltrate.

“I had a few connections, but not with the big bands,” recalls Pray, a former DJ for a Colorado college radio program that featured many Seattle bands which would later appear in *Hype!*. “The Young Fresh Fellows are not known throughout the world, but they're very respected in that community. In that sense, we knew the right bands, but I also think our approach helped. At first, people in Seattle might have thought, ‘Oh God, here comes Hollywood with their cameras.’ But within a few weeks or months, they realized we were not ‘Hollywood.’ They saw that we had the same financial struggles that they did, and that we were fighting really hard to make this movie.”

Pray also earned the trust of his subjects by filming concert footage of such highly respected but commercially overlooked Seattle groups as the Fastbacks, Seven Year Bitch and Gas Huffer, and then displaying the results to fellow

bands on the scene.

The film's director of photography was Robert Bennett, an AFI graduate and Pray's former radio station program director. Interestingly, Fastbacks guitarist Lulu Gargiulo frequently functioned as a camera operator on Pray's production team. Also helping were operators Erich Volkstorf, Tom Richmond and the Seattle-based Lars Larson.

From the outset, the filmmakers chose to marry the raw, earthy quality of the music with an appropriately unpretentious cinematic style. “I hate going to concerts and seeing five cameras darting around,” says Pray. “But Rob has a style of shooting onstage that's really cool — bands don't get mad at him. Occasionally, he'd get somebody's spit on his lens, but people started looking at our footage and saying, ‘Hey, this isn't like a big TV shoot.’ There was no flash in what we were doing. Our footage was really straight-ahead with almost no style, and I think bands responded to that. Even the most bitter cynics were saying, ‘Well, it is pretty cool footage. And they even filmed *Gas Huffer*...’”

Since *Hype!* was shot in Super 16 for an eventual 35mm blow-up, Bennett selected wide-latitude stocks that almost always had to be overexposed: Kodak's 7296 and 48 was employed in clubs or other dark environments, while 7245 was used for all other footage. Since the filmmakers were often shooting in characteristically packed, deafening clubs, they extended their less-is-more approach to their equipment package. “Partly out of economic necessity and partly out of choice, we filmed almost all of the events with two handheld cameras either on or in front of the stage, and one stationary camera on a tripod at the back of the hall,” recalls Bennett, who preferred the Canon 8-64mm and 11.5-138mm zooms for his handheld work. “We wanted to see the fans, the sweat, the facial expressions of the band members — things you don't normally get if the camera is zooming

around on top of a crane arm. That approach also seemed to be in the spirit of the project; we got a lot of interesting, intimate details."

Bennett, however, soon discovered that shooting amongst teeming throngs of Seattle concert-goers presented a unique technical problem. "We ended up having to shoot with rain covers because there was so much beer flying around at the shows!" he says with a laugh. "We primarily shot with Aaton XTRs, so we used the nylon factory rain covers. If we ran out of those, we'd go to garbage bags."

To capture the Seattle scene's most prominent bands, the filmmakers arranged a series of concerts through a local promoter. Bennett would arrive at the chosen venue hours before showtime to set up lighting, usually preferring several Par 64s — controlled, if possible, by the club's dimmer board. He also favored Arri 300-watt Fresnels, placed strategically in remote areas of the club; several fixtures had been trampled during previous shoots when he tried to use them as on-stage footlights. Bennett would also hide colored Kino Flo banks behind amplifiers on stage, or hang them from walls behind the bands to lend added depth to the dark clubs. Between musical sets, the cinematographer altered his lighting units to give each band a distinct ambience. "If you look at Dead Moon and Mudhoney, who played on the same stage 20 minutes apart, the look for each band is very different," Bennett explains. "For some of the more intense bands, we tried to use warmer, more saturated colors to heighten the music's impact, so I went with pink and red colored gels on the lights for Dead Moon's set.

"For Mudhoney, we shone light into sheets of Mylar that were suspended in 4' x 4' frames by rubber bands, to make a water-like pattern on the back wall behind the stage. The vibrations from the music itself moved the Mylar and accounted for the shimmery effect!"

For cutaways to the raucous audience, Bennett used the light spill from the stage to illuminate the first few rows of the crowd. "To see the rest of them, we usually just tried to backlight them so the light wasn't in their eyes," he says. "That way, we'd still get some definition [without annoying the crowd]. It was always tricky to get a light level that was both photographically and so-

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**Canadian
Shield: Troy
James
Hurtubise
strikes a heroic
pose while
sheathed in the
Ursus Mark VI,
a suit of armor
which he
devised in order
to wrestle with
a grizzly bear.**

cially acceptable for a given venue."

Pray fleshed out the high-energy concert scenes with archival material, wry interviews with Seattle musicians and footage of the Pacific Northwest's secluded, scenic environments. Bennett often caught these images while driving with Pray to clubs or interviews. The director comments. "My first reaction to some of Rob's shots would be, 'I'm not sure if that's balanced quite right.' I remember in particular a shot of the Space Needle during a beautiful sunset: there's this huge telephone pole in the frame that almost obliterates the niceness of the scene. That sort of photography almost becomes its own comment. There are a lot of beautiful scenic shots in the movie, but there are also other shots of just a muddy field with a truck parked next to it. That's the stuff I keep getting comments about. People tell me, 'Now that's the Northwest!'

"The location tells half the story," Pray concludes. "Hype! is a story of isolation, and what comes out of isolation."

Bringing Technology to Bear on *Project Grizzly*

by Peter Lynch

Project Grizzly documents the extraordinary exploits of Canadian raconteur Troy James Hurtubise, a self-described "close-quarter bear researcher" obsessed with confronting *Ursus horribilis* — the deadly grizzly bear. To that end, Hurtubise has created what he hopes is a grizzly-proof suit — the Ursus Mark VI — which fuses high-tech materials and home-spun ingenuity.

In June of 1995, at the Input TV conference in San Sebastian, Spain, National Film Board producer Michael Allder and I first discussed Hurtubise and his quest, perceiving him as a paradoxical, modern-day Don Quixote. In focusing upon his heroic aspects, we sought to present an archetypal metaphor for the Canadian experience, and a universal lament for the pursuit of "the impossible dream." To make those points, I put as much emphasis upon capturing the psychological changes in the character as I did upon his external clashes.

We had a little less than a month to prepare for the shoot from the time we were given the go-ahead. Our

looming deadline was determined by the period that grizzly bears hibernate in the Alberta Rocky Mountains, which can be as early as October. The film itself was constructed along the lines of a Western; we found that dispensing with much of the documentary baggage freed us to fashion an action-based narrative. The material that I had tried to shoot verité-style seemed rigged, and not in line with the romantic atmosphere of Troy's world. Scenes were blocked out in advance so that he could act out his story unencumbered. Capturing the moment was our priority, and we strove for spontaneity without compromising the film's believability and continuity.

Principle photography took place over a 15-day period. The job of chronicling Troy and his seven-man crew began in late September of 1995 in his hometown of North Bay, Ontario; during our 10 day shoot there, Troy put the Ursus Mark VI through a series of hair-raising preparatory tests. Our North Bay film crew consisted of cinematographer Tony Wannamaker, his assistant, a sound recordist, a grip, a gaffer and a production manager. For a five-day stint in the Rockies, we acquired second-unit cameraman Patrick McLaughlin, who also assumed the duties of the gaffer and grip. We could not have pulled off a shoot of this scale without the extensive assistance of the local community and the Project Grizzly crew; their involvement also allowed us a credible means of entering Troy's world.

We filmed *Project Grizzly* in Super 16 for a 35mm blow-up. Our portable and flexible Aaton XTR camera proved useful for handheld shots. The lens package included Zeiss 12-120mm, Canon 150-600mm and Angenieux 25-250mm zooms; 8, 12, 16 and 32mm primes for handheld applications; and an 800mm with doubler for extremely long shots.

Our primary film stock was Kodak's high-resolution, fine-grain 7248. For situations requiring soft lighting, manipulation or contrast, we chose the 7287; for night shooting, we utilized the 7298, which at times was rated at 1000

ASA. Tony believed that the Kodak stock lent a look consistent with the "Western" tradition — I prefer to think that we've created a "Northern" ambiance.

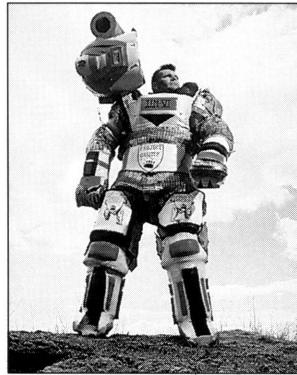
Tony found filming Troy a heady adventure that fluctuated in tone from the ridiculous to the sublime. He and the crew constantly faced dangerous and unusual situations as Troy evaluated the Ursus Mark VI suit. To simulate the power of a grizzly bear swat, a 400-pound log was suspended from a tree with a steel cable and released like a

giant pendulum. Troy took the hit in the torso and was knocked flat — but was quickly back on his feet. He also endured a beating from bikers wielding baseball bats and axes.

Tony faced perilous situations as well. During the North Bay shoot, our cinematographer was strapped to the windshield of a minivan to perform handheld shots while driving down the town's main drag. For an aerial John Ford-like panorama of the Rockies (shot with an 8mm lens), he was latched to a helicopter's fuselage; wearing only a seatbelt, he leaned out of the craft with the camera assistant holding onto him — or rather, his bomber jacket.

Camping out in the wilds of grizzly country at an elevation of 7,000 feet for consecutive 14-hour working days is enough to bring out "Lord of the Flies" syndrome" in a crew. Because we were undermanned, there was no time for a hierarchy in terms of division of labor; everyone was involved in the setup, breakdown and transportation of equipment. The Rocky Mountain sequences became particularly tiring for our group of city slickers when we encountered the complications of transporting equipment by horseback during extreme weather conditions (-30°F at night). The equipment was stored outside under a canopy designed by the crew to repel condensation and snow. Camera batteries were kept warm inside tents next to fire stoves. Makeshift covers fashioned out of wood and plastic sheathed our camera while filming in the snow.

Weather and logistics weren't the only obstacles. On the first shooting day, a horse from a neighboring camp



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Center:
Cinematographer Arthur Jafa executes his daring manipulation of background space during an interview session with narrator Thulani Davis for W.E.B. Du Bois - A Biography in Four Voices.
Below: A 19th-century still of African-American renaissance man Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois.

spooked one of our pack horses and set him off like a bucking bronco in the Calgary Stampede. The second-unit Aaton and Nagra were sent flying some 30 feet in the air — the recorder survived, but the camera's body was so badly damaged that we couldn't risk using it since the registration might be out of line. This was of particular concern, because we were concurrently framing for a 35mm blow-up in 1.85:1.

Early on during the Rockies shoot, it became apparent to us that Troy's suit was not going to work as he had intended. The adverse weather had closed in, and both subject and crew were acting a bit like grizzly bears when the sun finally shone on our last day out. At a lower altitude, however, an authentic *Ursus horribilis* emerged from the forest to feed on a dead horse. In the end, the bear had the last laugh, passing up a confrontation with Troy and his technology in favor of peaceful passage. Thus, Troy emerged intact from his adventure, suffering only a few impudent jests from the crew.

Gentleman, Activist and Scholar: W.E.B. Du Bois - A Biography in Four Voices

by Andrew O. Thompson

Award-winning independent filmmaker Louis Massiah (*Eyes on the Prize II, The Bombing on Osage Avenue*) first considered chronicling the life of African-American renaissance man Dr. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) in the late Eighties, while he was a producer at Philadelphia public television station WHYY. Initially, the film was designed solely to study Du Bois' sociological text *The Philadelphia Negro*. But since the activist's existence comprised eras of black American history unexplored on a mass-media level, Massiah felt obliged to fashion an overarching narrative. Some six years in the making, *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Biography in Four Voices* recently screened at the 1996 Toronto Film Festival's Planet Africa series, and is slated for a nationwide PBS broadcast on the evening of February 7.

Offers Massiah, "I hadn't intended to make such a sweeping history, but one of my [scholarly] advisors felt that because people know so little about the period, they would have no sense of

context. In terms of the popular imagination, there are vague notions of the time of African enslavement. But with the huge span between the end of enslavement and the beginning of the civil rights movement, there really isn't much sense of how African-Americans fit into U.S. history. Du Bois allows us a way to look at that."

In 1990, financed with start-up grants from the National Black Programming Consortium and the Paul Robeson



Fund, Massiah began acquiring archival stills, footage and documents. The director first scoured several hundred American archives; the painstaking process entailed sending out letters of inquiry and, in return, receiving Xerox copies of documents which would then be categorized depending upon their relevance.

Du Bois' ties to Communism made him a target of McCarthyism in America, but overseas, particularly in Europe, his ideas were greeted with enthusiasm. Due to Du Bois' international stature, Massiah found that much of the best archival film originated from the United Kingdom, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Russia and China, as well as such parts of the black diaspora as Ghana and Jamaica. But the scarcity of archival footage impacted the director's vision. Remarks Massiah, "It was good in the sense that the history we were telling wasn't being driven by images. Sometimes archival images become the crux of historical films, even when they are not central to the story."

Massiah assigned four African-American writers to offer a more

personal approach in depicting the activist's life. Playwright Wesley Brown (*Boogie Woogie and Booker T.*) devised "Part One: Black Folk and the New Century (1895-1915)," which recounts Du Bois' early years; his initial texts, *The Philadelphia Negro* and *The Souls of Black Folk*; his opposition to Booker T. Washington's support for segregation; and his co-founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Journalist/novelist Thulani Davis (1959, *Maker of Saints*) authored "Section Two: The Crisis and the New Negro (1919-1929)," which follows Du Bois' creation of the NAACP magazine *The Crisis*, and his co-founding of the Pan-African Movement. The late novelist Toni Cade Bambara (*The Salt Eaters, Deep Sightings and Rescue Missions*) wrote "Part Three: A Second Reconstruction (1934-1948)," a survey of Du Bois' tenure at Atlanta University, his embrace of Marxism, and identity issues inherent to his groundbreaking tome *Black Reconstruction*. Finally, poet/playwright Amiri Baraka (*Dutchman, Transbluesency*) composed "Part Four: Color, Democracy,

Colonies and Peace (1949-1963)," an account of Du Bois' turmoil during the Red Scare era and his eventual emigration to Ghana, where he toiled on the *Encyclopedia Africana* until his death.

Says Massiah, "Among scholars, activists and writers, everyone has their own take on Du Bois, so [using] these four writers seemed like a way of reflecting that diversity. I very much wanted to have narrators who were engaged in the subject. For example, Toni Cade Bambara gives her take on the Thirties and lambasts the *Gone with the Wind, Birth of a Nation*, white-academic take on this part of American culture that had lied about [the era of] Reconstruction. When you present [a new] point of view, it's helpful to have the writer there



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as narrator to reinforce it."

The project's piecemeal production schedule, dictated by the availability of funds, led Massiah to collaborate with three cinematographers. Given this situation, the director trusted his sound person, J.T. Takagi, to provide the film's continuity. The documentary's aesthetic was determined by Massiah's extensive conversations and camera tests with cameraman Arthur "A.J." Jafa (*Daughters of the Dust, Seven Songs for Malcolm X, Crooklyn*).

Remarks the director, "Talking to A.J. about film is similar to listening to a John Coltrane riff; it's just a wonderful combination of storytelling and technology. A.J. spoke of layers, the relationship between foreground and background, and what happens in that nether space between your furthest background image and your subject in the foreground. [Using light and diffusion materials] to punch out the subject in some ways creates a slight distortion in space, but it brings the interviewees out in a way that holds your eye."

Offers Jafa, "My main concerns were: 'How do we animate documentaries so they take on a little more visual weight than they normally do, but without it being gimmicky?' and 'How do we avoid not just the same level of redundancy that you typically see?' I was really interested in photographer James Van Der Zee's [black-and-white] portraits, and I wanted to effect that look in color. That's where I came up with the idea of the backdrop. My original conception was to have something a little more stable — a solid backdrop like a Duratran, but one I could shoot light through to change its color.

"If you look at medieval, pre-Renaissance perspective painters like Giotto and Cimbre," continues Jafa, "they have this way of focusing you on the subject matter, and the background space is almost like the space you see in classical European paintings. It's really like abstract painting [in the sense of], 'How do you create a backdrop that actually has resonance in its own right, but at the same time doesn't distract from the subject?' That's been an ongoing concern for me. I would like to get to a point where I can do a feature that is all talking heads but is as intense as *Star Wars* just because of how you handle the space around the subject:

the space would be active, not the camera movement."

During the development of the Du Bois documentary, however, Jafa assumed second-unit camera duties on Spike Lee's bio-pic *Malcolm X*, so Massiah turned to cameraman Larry Banks (*Juice, John Henrik Clarke: A Long and Mighty Walk*). To simulate shooting conditions for the interviews, most of which were to be conducted in the subjects' homes, he and Massiah performed further tests in a friend's Brooklyn apartment; Kodak 7293 was the primary stock, with additional use of the 7245 for the film's few exterior interviews.

Banks, however, left midway through production to shoot Forest Whitaker's HBO film *Strapped. Enter Michael Chin (In the Shadow of the Stars, Malcolm X - Make It Plain)*, whom Massiah had collaborated with on *Eyes on the Prize II*. Chin wound up photographing most of the interviews, armed with a 16mm Aaton LTR-7 and a lone 750-watt tungsten fixture. Explains Chin, "Louis had set up this look of using scrim material in the background. He had a bag full of sheer material in different colors — blue, pink and red, and some with [shaded] streaks mixed in. It's very similar to the single or double netting used in front of the stage at an opera to diffuse the look. But the locations often dictated what we could and could not do. To really make it work, we had to move the sheer material as far back as we could from the subject, but it was never quite that easy because the rooms were so small."

Chin also photographed images from Du Bois' writings, such as *The Souls of Black Folk*, from the Leslie collection of first editions in San Francisco. Many of the archival photographs and other still images were shot on D2 and BetacamSP video by Dave Koslow on the IMC, and 7248 color negative on an Oxberry equipped with a Linx motion-control system computer by Michael Munoz. But Massiah's choice of format was often dictated by aesthetic concerns. The director elaborates, "To do multiple moves on one photograph using the IMC computer system [a programmable art camera stand] worked better for us [on video]. For some of the newspaper headlines of the Boston riot — in the first section of the film, when people are protesting Booker T. Washington and

a fight ensues at a church — I wanted eight moves on one photo zig-zagging all across the page. That didn't lend itself very well to shooting on film, because I couldn't immediately see what I was getting. But we sometimes shot on film to warm things up a bit; the temperature of the image is quite important to me. If we wanted the footage to look a bit warmer, as if [it had originated from] a period era, we shot on film."

According to Massiah, the animated stills done by Louis Klahr (such as *The Crisis* covers) were "a very tactile animation; he was moving each of the pictures [photos on the floor] by hand. The rising effect is really just his hand in front of the lens, and multiple exposures were done by just rewinding the film."

Digital animator Beth Warshafsky composed the interludes (culled from some 10,000 collected images) between the four segments on a Macintosh computer.

Massiah managed to complete the documentary with funds from the William Penn Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the National Endowments of the Arts, the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, and portions of his recently awarded six-figure "genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation.

Of the finished product, Massiah says, "I think of this documentary as a lesson in American history, and not just African-American history. I hope it allows us a window through which to look at where we have been as Americans — a place to begin discussion of the questions that will need to be addressed in the 21st Century, so we're not fighting battles that could have been cleared up if we had been bold enough to face the critical issues of this time."

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Winning in the feature category were *Anne Frank Remembered* by Jon Blair; *Troublesome Creek: A Mid-western* by veterans Jeanne Jordan and Steven Ascher (see *AC* April '96); *The War Within: A Portrait of Virginia Woolf* by John Fuegi and Morten Bruss; and *David Attenborough's The Private Life of Plants: The Birds & the Bees* by Pat Mitchell, Vivian Schiller and Mike Salisbury. Scoring the sole honor in the shorts section was *Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of Mark O'Brien* by Jessica Wu. Harvard University graduate Amanda Micheli earned the David L. Wolper IDA Student Award for *Just for the Ride*, a 16mm thesis project shot in New Mexico, and supervised by Ross McElwee (*Sherman's March*).

The IDA's 1996 Career Achievement Award went to media mogul Ted Turner, who transformed a small, independent UHF TV station in Atlanta into a massive multi-media conglomerate that now includes CNN, TBS Superstation, New Line Cinema, Castle Rock Entertainment and TNT. Says IDA Executive Director Betsy A. McLane, "Ted Turner has encouraged non-fiction filmmakers to follow their dreams by allowing their documentaries to be seen in tens of millions of homes in every corner of the world. This award was given in recognition of his unique vision and dedication to an idea that has transformed our ability to communicate on a global scale."

The 57-year-old National Film Board of Canada reaped the IDA's Preservation and Scholarship Award. The NFB has some 9,000 documentary, animated and short films in its archives in Ottawa and Montreal. Most of these titles are being transferred to laserdiscs, facilitating access by the public and reducing future wear on the original film elements. The NFB also maintains a "stock shot" library consisting of more than 20 million feet of original 16mm and 35mm negatives, some of which dates back to 1895. The stock footage is selected from outtakes of NFB-produced English- and French-language films, and is stored in temperature- and humidity-controlled vaults. Digital technology is being used to restore and enhance these pieces of film so that they can be used to establish period settings in modern films.

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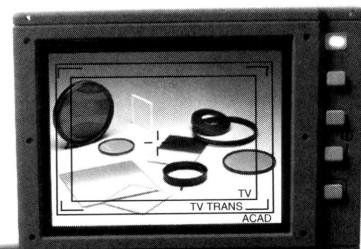
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As an 18-year-old jackaroo (cowboy) on his uncle's Australian ranch, herding sheep and mending fences in the 110-degree heat, John Seale, ASC, ACS was transfixed by the shimmering beauty and almost hallowed sense of timelessness that sprang from the rugged terrain: the endless distances, the pervasive silence, the achingly beautiful sunrises and sunsets. It was here, at the edge of the Queensland desert, that Seale acquired the sense of place and striking feel for nature that he would later bring to such films as *Witness*, *The Mosquito Coast*, and *Dead Poets Society*, each directed by Peter Weir, and, most recently, *The English Patient*, a World War II-era love story shot in rural Italy and the deserts of Tunisia. "For me, the most interesting images in the outback were of people or animals, engaged in some form of activity in the foreground, backlit in the dust with shadows streaking toward the observer," says Seale. "That's how I felt *The*

English Patient should look."

Adapted from Michael Ondaatje's 1992 Booker Prize-winning novel, *The English Patient* concerns Count Laszlo de Almásy (Ralph Fiennes), a Hungarian linguist/pilot leading a map-making expedition of the then-unexplored Sahara Desert for England's Royal Geographic Society. During the waning days of the war, Almásy's plane is shot down over the desert, leaving him barely alive and horribly burned. As the Count lies dying in an abandoned Italian monastery, he recalls happier, pre-war days when, based in North Africa, he met and fell in love with Katharine Clifton (Kristin Scott Thomas), the aristocratic wife of a fellow aviator.

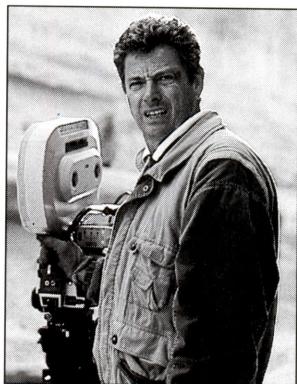
The multilayered drama jumps back and forth in time and

place, presenting not only the story of Almásy and Katharine, but also those of Hana (Juliette Binoche), a tender yet emotionally fractured

French-Canadian nurse who cares for the injured airman, and Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), an embittered Canadian secret agent with an insight into the pilot's mysterious past. British writer/director Anthony Minghella (*Truly, Madly, Deeply*; *Mr. Wonderful*) sought

to streamline the story so it would be easier to follow, without sacrificing the fragmented narrative's liberal use of flashbacks.

The finished film, which runs a full two hours and 43 minutes, consists of hundreds of short scenes, and keeping track of "what, where and when" required concentrated effort on the part of its mak-



ers. Seale, taking a break from color-timing the film at Deluxe Laboratories in Los Angeles, recalls, "It was a formidable task — the continuity of light, the continuity of cutbacks, shooting scenes out of sequence in the desert in winter,

psychological equivalents: the subtle yet discernible contrast between the Tunisian and Italian sequences mirrors the emotional shifts within the story. Warm tones were the obvious choice for the desert scenes of Almásy and

upon HMIs to extend both the dawn and dusk and to substitute for the sun on cloudy days. (For sequences shot at Cinecitta Studios in Rome, an array of 20Ks replaced the HMIs.) Gentle fill light provided whatever was needed for



Photos by Phil Bray, courtesy of Miramax.

with its short days."

Although most of the movie was set in the desert, the filmmakers opted to shoot in the standard 1.85:1 aspect ratio. "You would almost automatically think anamorphic," concedes Seale, "but we felt this was a film about *people* in the desert, not the desert with people. Anamorphic would have attracted too much attention to the surroundings. We made a vow never to pan across, tilt down from, or worse, zoom out from the landscape to the actors."

Similar reasoning dictated the choice of lenses. "We wanted to feature the characters in the foreground, so we tended to use medium to long lenses. This helped to reduce distortion on the actors and 'pull up' the background. In this way we were able to surround the characters with the environment, keeping it a 'presence' rather than featuring it as another character or subject."

The physical landscapes in *The English Patient* correspond to

Katharine's flourishing pre-war romance, but Seale wanted a cooler, bleaker look for Almásy's deathbed ruminations in Italy, a country which had been ravaged by five years of fighting.

Tunisia was chosen for the desert sequences because of its copper-toned sand, so reminiscent of the landscapes in *Lawrence of Arabia*. But part of the area was an old, very dirty flood plain. "The ground [of the flood plain] wasn't covered with sand, but this hard, crusty, dirty stuff that didn't really have the colors we wanted," says Seale. "We used corals to enhance the color. The graduated filters were light corals, used to add color to the ground at the bottom of the frame. The top was clear so we could use any combination in the sky: Pola screens, ND grads, etcetera. These were only used where necessary to maintain continuity of color in the desert."

The mid-winter sun provided only seven hours of daylight during which to shoot. Seale relied

balance, with rolls of bleached or unbleached muslin laid out on the sand to act as a sort of giant reflector. "I think it looks far more natural if your fill light is coming from the sun bouncing off muslin, back up onto the actors' faces, rather than from a lamp 10 feet high that is blasting in," explains Seale. "I mainly used unbleached muslin because it's a warmer color and matches the sand color better. The bleached muslin is much whiter."

One big advantage to shooting during the winter months was that it allowed early-morning scenes to be shot at midday. "During winter in the desert, the sun is very low, which gives you a lovely crosslight," says the cameraman. "You don't get that hot toplight of summer which is such a bane to the photographer, where you're getting awful eye shadows or, if the actors are wearing hats, shadows under the hats."

For close-up and medium shots, Seale opened up the aperture slightly. "If you just open up and

Ministering to The English Patient

John Seale, ASC, ACS contributes his fine eye for detail to a soul-wrenching tale of lost love.

by Jean Oppenheimer

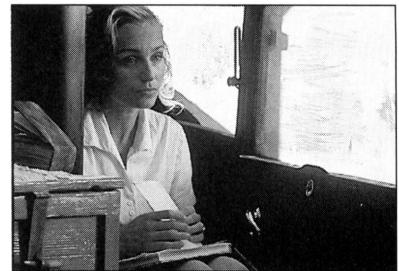
Opposite page:
Hungarian
aviator/explorer
Count Laszlo de
Almásy (Ralph
Fiennes) stands
amid the
parched North
African
landscape.
Australian
cameraman
John Seale
(below left)
used corals to
enhance the
Tunisian
location's
"dirty" coloring.

This page:
Alluring
aristocrat
Katharine
Clifton (Kristen
Scott Thomas)
is Almásy's lost
love. Seale
regularly
underexposed
for faces and
found that
Kodak's 5298
extracted
plenty of detail
in shadows
while burning
out sunlit areas.

Near right: An Allied soldier attempts to rescue Hana (Juliette Binoche) after the frazzled French-Canadian nurse has wandered into a minefield in the Italian countryside. In the background, Sikh bomb disposal expert Kip (Naveen Andrews) scans for submerged explosive charges. Far right: Trapped in a jeep during a massive Tunisian sandstorm, a troubled Katharine mulls over her fate. Bottom: Thief-turned-Canadian secret agent Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe) roams the bustling streets of Cairo in the days before his torture at the hands of German aggressors.



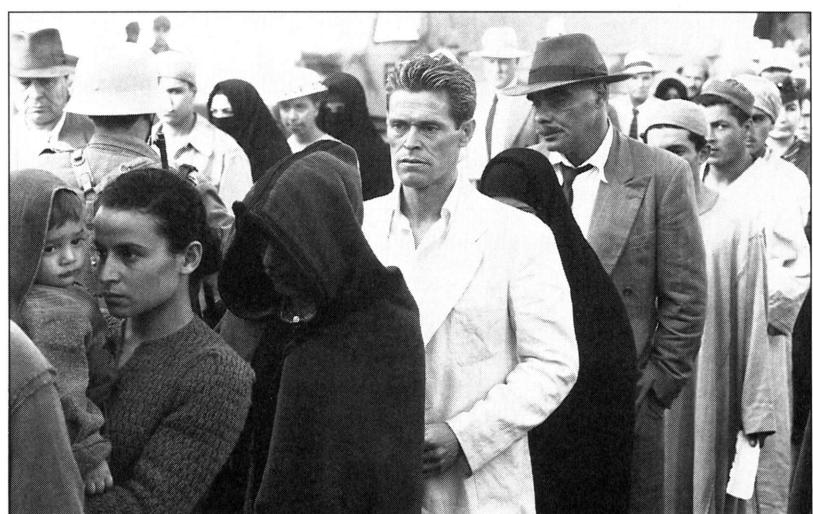
"On tungsten negative, this would be 'white' light. Adding excess CTO to the foreground removed the red and inadvertently added blue to the background moonlight. This trick was used when we needed to get the max out of a generator or spread at night on desert



let the rest of it burn out, it makes the desert look hotter. Essentially, you're burning out the sun and digging into the shadow area with the aperture. Normally, if we thought we should be a stop-and-a-third underexposed on the face area to get a nice feeling of natural fill light, we sometimes just opened up another third of a stop."

Seale relied on available light when the locations — precarious rock formations and caves located miles from nowhere — proved inaccessible to generators or too far away to run a cable. "I just exposed the film so that we saw detail in the shadow area. I knew the highlight area would burn out, but I also knew that the Eastman stock would maintain detail in the burned-out area."

The cinematographer relies on a single film stock throughout a picture, a habit he picked up years ago when high-speed and lower-rated film had noticeably different grain structures, and shifting from one to the other bothered him aesthetically. On *The English Patient* he used Kodak 5298, throwing in neutral-density filters during the day to bring down the ASA. "I generally use an 85ND9. If it's still too bright, I'll go to an 85ND12, which will get me down to between 40 and 60 ASA, a very usable range for daylight exteriors. As the light fails, you simply start pulling the filters out. You can hold your exposure and your shooting time well into dusk. This is also why I always shoot on a tungsten negative. By slowly reducing the 85



filter [to correct the color temperature] and removing the ND filters as the color temperature drops and the light is fading, you are increasing the ASA right when you need it. This extends the shooting day remarkably, but if you then push one stop and pull the 85 filter and go to 200 degrees on the shutter, it is quite amazing how late you can shoot.

"At night, we'd gel up the lamps by putting on a quarter, half or full CTO for moonlight," he continues. "I don't like mixing full CTB with full CTO. To me the range is too far, even for the Eastman color. I love 98, but I still find that it grabs blues very quickly. Even in the timing run I'm finding that the blues are popping.

"Sometimes we would 'trick' the workprint timers by not putting blue gels on the tungsten lamps for moonlight," he adds.

exteriors. It works, and very well."

For the Italian scenes — shot in and around Tuscany — Seale and Minghella wanted an absence of color. Although some ND grads were used to control the sky and provide some color for the sunrise, no filters were used for shots detailing the overall look of the place. Ambience was instead provided by the design, costume and art departments, which avoided using desert colors in Italy. Desaturation was an option, but in the end it wasn't necessary.

Seale had high words of praise for production designer Stuart Craig (a two-time Oscar winner for *Gandhi* and *Dangerous Liaisons*), who scoured the countryside to find the perfect backdrop: a white stone monastery (the Monastero di Sant' Anna, near the town of Pienza). To extend the whiteness, Seale used beadboard

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Above: A candlelit dinner party scene in which a drunken and distraught Almásy makes a spectacle of himself. To convey the isolation between Katharine and her oblivious spouse, Geoffrey (Colin Firth), Seale chose not to pull focus in shots calling for contrasting profiles between the couple. Right: Hana follows a path of candles situated strategically by her future lover, Kip. Seale remarks that the reflective qualities of the French actress' radiant skintone proved complimentary to Tuscany's drained color scheme.

for bounce fill rather than the creamier-colored muslin used in the desert. "Stuart Craig was tenacious; there's no other word for him. He searched the corners of Tunisia for locations. Often he had three or four choices. Even when we had decided that a location was suitable, Stuart would come up with one or two more which were even better. Amazingly, Tunisia did not offer up perfect sand hills that were within operating distance of hotel facilities. Consequently, quite a few of the locations had to be split, which disoriented Anthony and the actors a bit. But we were able to solve these problems with comprehensive storyboarding, and were able to make maximum use of Stuart's locations. His backup teams of set dressers were also very good."

The cinematographer found that Juliette Binoche's naturally pale complexion fit the color scheme perfectly. "She has lovely opalescent skin which is very reflective, and we tried to preserve that quality in the timing," says Seale. On the other hand, Kristin Scott Thomas sported a healthy tan in the desert, courtesy of makeup and warm filters. "Isolated softening was used on the ladies, but these filters did not cover the entire frame," he notes.

The 33-week, six-day-per-week shoot proved frustrating at times. In staging a sandstorm, the

production couldn't find sand that was dry enough to spread with ritter fans. "Rain in the area had made the sand too wet, so the special effects team used some plaster powder, which stuck to our clothes and then built up and caked us all over," recalls Seale with a grimace.

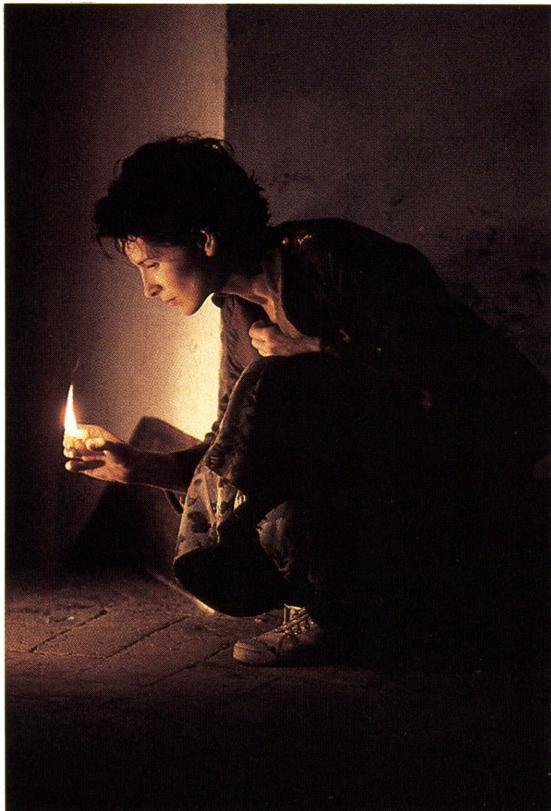
During pre-production surveys, the cameraman used his own version of the small calculator-type devices which indicate, months in advance, when and from where the sun will rise. Seale explains, "I have this piece of tin which has some lines on it. Used in conjunction with a compass, it will give a very reasonable indication of where and at what time the sun will rise and set. On the back, it gives the altitude as well. It's very simple, doesn't need batteries and won't break if you drop it."

However, even the best-laid plans can sometimes go awry. "Sometimes on surveys we'd see the most beautiful light, and I'd say, 'If

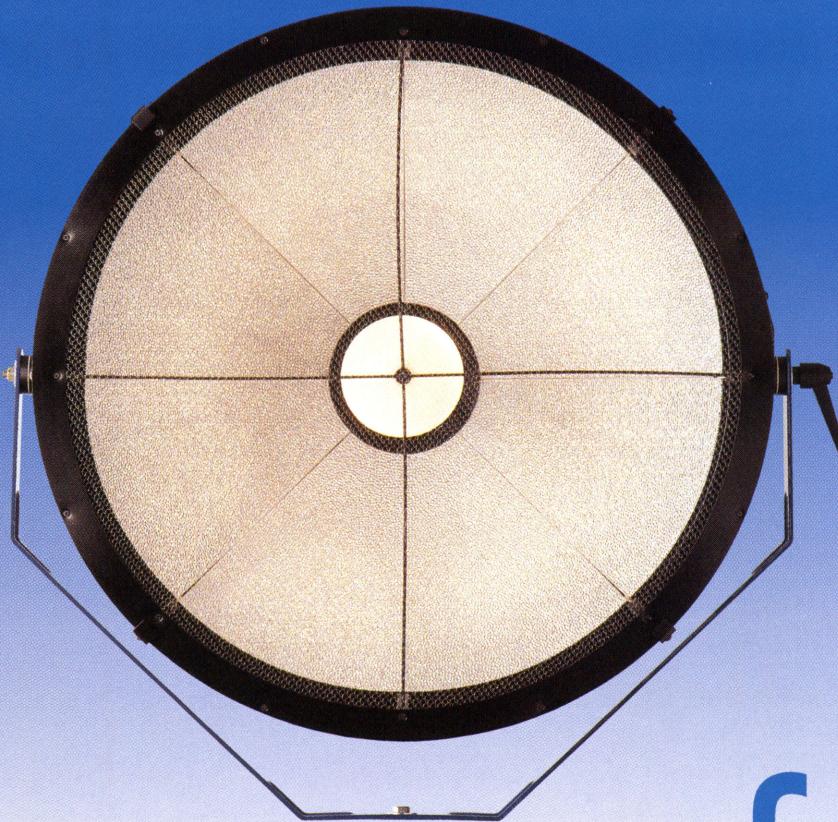
we could just shoot this scene at five past 10 on a Wednesday morning.' Hearing that, Stevie Andrews, one of the best first ADs I've ever worked with, would make sure that we did. But occasionally, when we got there to actually shoot, the sky would be overcast and miserable — and we would have to shoot it anyway," he says with a laugh.

Language proved to be another obstacle, as the Italian crew had difficulty deciphering Seale's Australian accent. "They were hard workers and good technicians, though," he says warmly. He singles out Steadicam/B-camera operator Daniele Massaccesi, second-unit cameraman Remi Adefarasin, BSC (who served as first-unit cinematographer on director Minghella's *Truly, Madly, Deeply*), and especially focus puller Roberto De Negris. "When you are handholding a 10:1 zoom with a 1000-foot load on the back for a close shot of an actor's eyes as he walks around a room, and the focus puller has got them sharp, that's phenomenal."

The only crew member Seale brought with him for the



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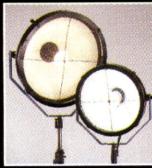
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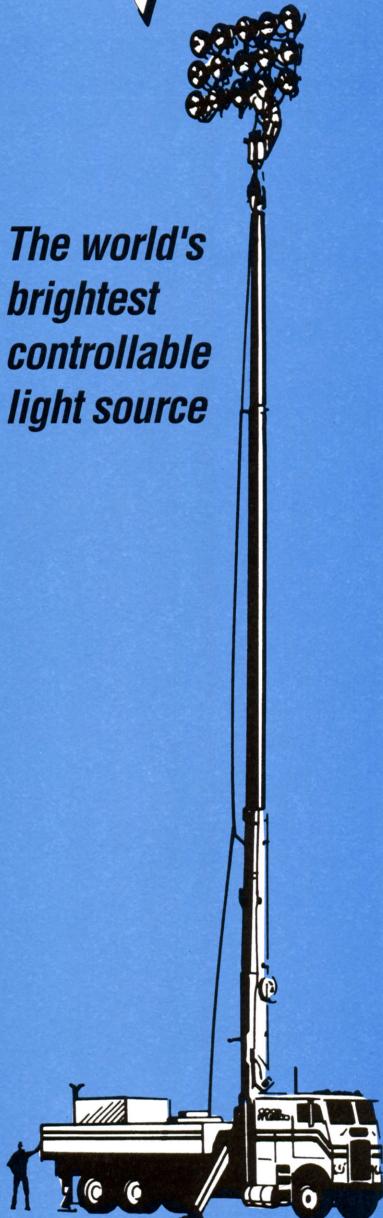
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shoot was New York-based gaffer Morris "Mo" Flam. The two had worked together on *The Firm* and *The Paper*, and reteamed after *The English Patient* on Rob Reiner's film *The Ghosts of Mississippi*. An admiring Seale remarks, "I'd walk over thin ice for Mo."

Growing up in the Australian film industry, where films are shot in five to six weeks, Seale learned to work fast, and it's still his preferred pace. He always uses Panavision cameras (on *The English Patient*, his A-camera was a Platinum and his B-camera a Gold) because he finds them so operator-friendly. "The magazines can go on the top or the back, which is a nice alternative to have for balancing or fitting into tight corners. Plus, the Primo lenses are very anti-flare and color-constant."

He says the Primo zooms are so compatible with the primes that he sees no reason to favor the primes. "Consequently, I use the zoom as much as possible as a 'fixed' lens. I try to hide the movement of the zoom in a pan, dolly or track, so that the audience is never aware of the movement. For example, during a pan you can start on a 40mm and end on a 75mm, and get a much nicer composition. Some might argue that you can lay a track in there. But during the pan, you might decide that the 75mm is too tight, and that you want to just ease it out a little. It's lovely to be able to just grab the handle and go back out to 60mm without having to re-lay track. "I also believe that when you slow down on the technical side, the actors lose their im-

petus and have to gear up again, which creates a major discord in the rhythm of the shooting. I will sacrifice any little subtleties of quality to keep moving fast."

Seale says that he is happiest when operating the camera himself. He explains that the Australian system of shooting is similar to the British system, in that the director goes to the operator rather than the cinematographer to discuss shot composition. "That's massive input, which is why I love operating," he says. "Also, as an operator you are the only one on the set who is looking through the camera and seeing the film as it will appear on the screen."

Seale honed his operating skills while working with master cinematographers such as Russell Boyd, ACS; Donald McAlpine, ASC and Peter James, ASC, ACS. His work with Boyd included operating on Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, *The Last Wave* and *Gallipoli*, which led to their aforementioned projects together.

While seated at the Panaflex, Seale is always searching for small moments or unconscious gestures which will heighten the emotional dimensions of a character or story. He is particularly sensitive to how framing and focus can be manipulated to say something about the relationships between characters. One such example occurs relatively late in *The English Patient* during a dinner-party sequence that takes place after Katharine has ended her liaison with Almásy. Distraught, the airman arrives at the party in a

Opposite: Almásy and Katharine share a last dance.

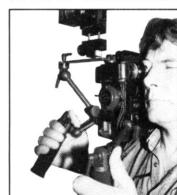
drunken state. As Seale relates, "He comes in and sits down at the table. Katharine's husband, Geoffrey (Colin Firth), is seen in profile, sharp, in the foreground. Everyone else falls away, but you can make out Katharine in the background. She's soft, and we never pulled focus to her. Instead, we cut to her profile: she's sharp and Colin is soft. We never related the two by pulling focus. In fact, we isolated them by not pulling focus. I love that. It visually tells the story of these two — the infidelity between them."

In another scene set at the Italian monastery, Hana, with lantern in hand, walks into the monastery's kitchen to wash herself, only to collapse in tears of stress and emotion. "In the background, Willem Dafoe comes through the door," Seale says. "Juliette throws her head on the table, and even though we only had focus on the top of her head, we still didn't throw it back to Willem. Because it's her scene, her emotion, her moment, and he's intruding upon it. If you pull to him, you include him in her moment. By not pulling, you keep him back and force him to come forward, which he does. He walks forward and leans down, and just his face and hand are sharp."

"I think it's a much more powerful scene that way, even though you can't see Juliette's eyes. You're just looking at strands of hair that are sharp, and a bit of shoulder. In effect, you are forcing the audience to stay with her. It's very hard to do this type of thing with focus when you're watching a monitor. You really need to be operating."

For Seale, collaboration is key to a satisfying working relationship, and he says that working with Minghella was enormously fulfilling. "Anthony was a joy. He never hesitated to ask for opinions or advice, not only from me but from everyone around him. We had a lovely feeling of a whole team making this film. Consequently, my own feeling of satisfaction at seeing the end result is enormous." ♦

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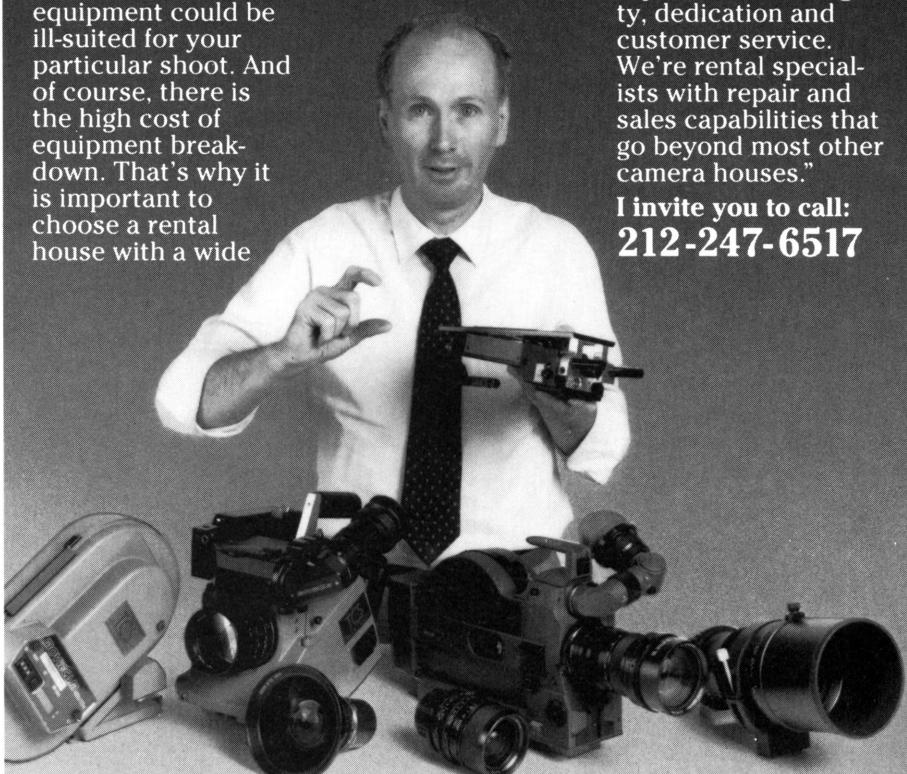
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Given the jaded, seen-it-all attitude of modern film audiences, the task of bringing another musical to the big screen might seem foolhardy at best. In a world where most viewers consider the genre to be the cinematic equivalent of the Model T, a filmmaker bent on repairing the old jalopy for one more run must be a master mechanic indeed.

Director Alan Parker, however, has had better fortune than most in the realm of movie musicals. He took his first stab at the form in 1976 with *Bugsy Malone*, a fizzy spoof of 1930s' gangster flicks that featured an all-kid friendly cast (including a youthful Jodie Foster). Four years later, Parker hit paydirt with *Fame*, a rousing crowd-pleaser that tracked eight talented teen performers through the halls of New York's High School of Performing Arts. In addition to fueling nationwide fantasies of curtain-calls in the footlights, the film earned Academy Awards for Best Song ("Fame") and Best Original Score, as well as five other nominations, and also spawned a television series. Spurred on by that success, Parker took a darker turn with 1982's *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, a surreal, angst-filled adaptation of the blockbuster rock opera. With its disturbing mix of Fascistic imagery and acid-trip animation, *The Wall* remains a cult favorite, particularly with its target audience of anti-Establishment teens. Parker's most recent success with musical material was 1991's sleeper hit *The Commitments*, a

shaggy-dog story about a spunky Dublin band's determined attempts to popularize classic soul music in their hometown.

With this estimable track record behind him (as well as his expert handling of gripping dramatic fare such as *Midnight Express*, *Birdy*, *Angel Heart* and *Mississippi Burning*), Parker was the logical choice to helm Disney's epic screen version of *Evita*, which endured 20 years in the purgatory known as

overture fizzled, but the possibility of a film version was revived when producer Robert Stigwood capitalized on the chart-topping album by collaborating with Lloyd Webber and Rice to create a stage version that took London by storm. After opening at the Prince Edward Theatre on June 21, 1978, *Evita* became a musical megahit; by the time it closed, it had been performed 2,900 times in the West End, and the subsequent Broadway adaptation

An Iconic *Evita*

Director Alan Parker and cinematographer Darius Khondji, AFC add sophisticated shadings to an epic screen adaptation of the popular opera.

by Stephen Pizzello

"development" before beginning production, at long last, in February of 1996.

Ironically enough, the project's wrap date in May of '96 marked the closure of a full circle. After hearing Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's original concept album of the opera in 1976, Parker himself had approached the duo in the hopes of adapting the story for the big screen. That first

earned seven Tony Awards at the end of its first season in New York.

In 1979, after the play's smash debut in London, Parker was approached by Stigwood, who asked if he was still interested in the idea of directing a movie based on the musical. Says Parker, "I had just finished working on *Fame*, so I said no. Normally you don't regret turning down films, but I regretted that one. I watched over the years as other people got involved, but it still never got made." The director finally got his chance in the summer of 1994, when producer Andrew Vanja came back to him bearing the old chestnut. Bowing to Fate, Parker agreed to write and direct the project, which became a three-way effort involving Cinergi, the Robert Stigwood Organisation and Parker's own company, Dirty Hands.

Although the music of *Evita* remains as popular and compelling as ever, Parker says that his primary motivation in making the film was to mine the story's mother lode of drama, which is based upon the real-life tale of Eva Duarte, a



Khondji checks his light meter as Parker ponders the next shot.



peasant girl who rose to power after marrying politician Juan Domingo Perón, who later became president of Argentina. Narrated by Ché (Antonio Banderas), a sardonic Brechtian Everyman, the screen version is both an inspiring and tragic account of Eva's short but eventful life, which began in 1919 and spanned three turbulent decades.

The story, as related by Ché, is classic tragedy. The illegitimate daughter of a penniless farmer in the tiny Pampas town of Junin, located west of Buenos Aires, young Eva (Madonna) dreams of escaping to the big city. She gets her chance in her teens, when opportunity arrives in the form of a popular tango singer named Agustín Magaldi (Jimmy Nail). After charming the traveling minstrel, Eva accompanies him to Buenos Aires, where she bucks long odds to become a radio and film actress of some renown. Wending her way into high-society circles, Eva soon strikes up a ro-

mance with rising politician Juan Perón (Jonathan Pryce), but their relationship is scandalized by members of both the political establishment and the military, leading to Perón's brief arrest and the populist revolt of October 17, 1945.

The pair decide to marry, and with the ebullient and inspirational Eva at his side, Perón is elected president. Eva quickly establishes herself as an ardent supporter of Perónism, hawking democracy on her famed "Rainbow Tour" of Europe. With the birth of the Eva Perón Foundation and the Perónist Women's Party, the myth of "Saint Eva" begins to grow, and she becomes the people's choice to run as a vice presidential candidate. This development sparks dissent by the military and other politicians, who are alarmed by her increasing influence, but Eva is forced to renounce the vice presidency when she is diagnosed with terminal cancer. Her subsequent death in 1952, at the age of 33, is mourned in heart-rending fashion

by the masses, who deify her and thereby ensure the iconic immortality of their "Evita."

In addressing this saga, Parker sought to avoid the usual expectations for a film whose narrative is told solely via musical means. There is no spoken dialogue in *Evita*, but the director approached the film as he would any dramatic picture. "This is a large-scale epic, a dramatic and political film that happens to be sung all the way through," Parker says. "But the decisions that we made were always based first and foremost upon the dramatic elements; the music was just something that was there. We never compromised anything because of the music. In that regard, I believe *Evita* is different from most other musicals that have been made. If you look at the history of musical films — particularly in recent years, when they haven't succeeded — it's almost as if at certain points [viewers] must put a different computer chip in their brain that says, 'Oh, now

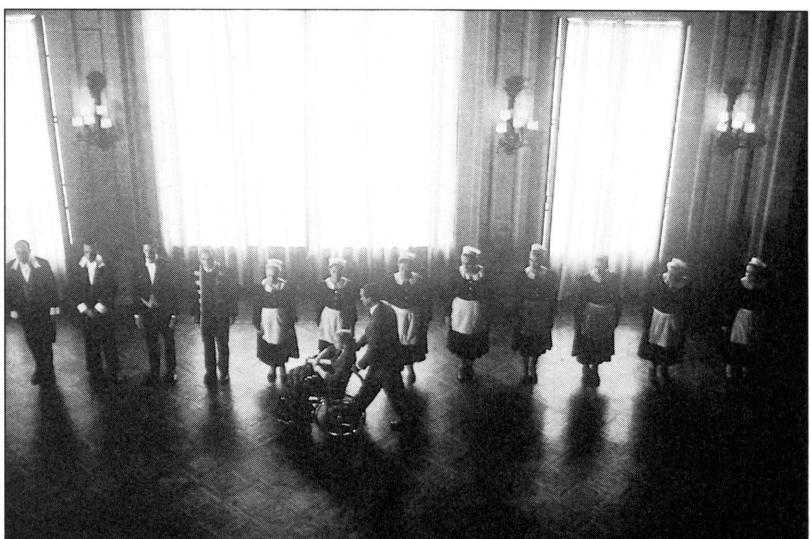
Eva Perón (Madonna) addresses the masses from the balcony of the presidential palace. Wider shots of the scene were filmed at the real balcony in Buenos Aires, which was lit with Wendy lights and crane-mounted Maxi-Brutes. For tight shots the crew duplicated the lighting on stage at Shepperton Studios, breaking the Wendy light's modules into four smaller units and placing them as far as possible from the replica of the balcony.



Above: Armed with a viewfinder, Parker frames a shot of the young Eva being dragged away from the coffin of her father.
Right: An ailing Eva is wheeled past her servants by Juan Perón (Jonathan Pryce). Khondji favored the more dramatic look of blown-out windows, which he often accomplished with a row of Dino lights mounted outside.

they're doing the musical bit.' That denies the normal instincts, which — if you come from a dramatic film background, as I have — involve questions such as 'What's dramatically truthful and powerful?' and 'What's cinematically interesting?'. Those were the questions we had to ask and answer before we dealt with the various pieces of music."

Parker's strategy was enthusiastically endorsed by the cinematographer he recruited to shoot the film: Darius Khondji, AFC, who has risen to prominence with a string of impressive-looking films that include *Delicatessen*, *Before the Rain* (with additional photography by Manuel Teran), *The City of Lost Children*, *Seven* (which earned him an ASC Award nomination; see AC Oct. 1995) and *Stealing Beauty* (See AC June 1996). Parker initially approached Khondji because his most frequent photographic collaborators, Peter Biziou, BSC and Michael Seresin, BSC, were unavailable. He had been impressed with the cinematographer's work on *Delicatessen*, and soon found that Khondji was both personable and willing to adapt his working methods. "Before I met Darius, I thought he was going to be very serious, but he wasn't like that at all; he's got a wonderful sense of humor," Parker relates. "This project was difficult for Darius in that I always work with the same people, including



my camera operator, Mike Roberts. Darius was very gracious in taking all of that in stride. Also, I always use the English system [in which the camera operator plays a prominent role in compositional decisions]. I don't think it's necessarily better than the American system [in which the director of photography has more influence over both lighting and composition]; it's just the way I've been doing things for 25 years. I speak directly to the operator with regard to the composition of the shot, but Darius was always involved in the discussions."

Khondji admits, "When I received the script I didn't know it was a musical; I thought it was just going to be a normal dramatic film.

I liked the script, but when I found out it was going to be a musical I hesitated. I didn't really want to do a musical at the time, but I wanted to work with Alan and our first meeting went really well. Alan gave me the energy and passion to do the project. He spoke about this woman with great enthusiasm, and his office was completely wallpapered with photos of *Evita*. He was totally possessed by the music, which he played for me. There was something really dark and moody about it; it was really beautiful. I have a tendency to prefer the dark side of things. Even with *Stealing Beauty*, I was looking for the more dramatic elements in the story."

Asked if they had drawn inspiration from any previous musical films, both men expressed

their admiration for Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* (1971), which was photographed by Geoffrey Unsworth, BSC, who earned an Academy Award for his atmospheric efforts. "That was a complete film, and not just a musical film," notes Parker. "I've always said, in perverse jest, that the reason I get all of the musicals nowadays is that Bob Fosse is no longer with us. I really admire what he accomplished." Parker also notes that *West Side Story*'s "powerful marriage of film and music" made a lasting impression upon him when he saw the picture in his youth.

Khondji says that he forms many of his visual strategies for a project during his initial con-

tact with both the script and the director. "That's when I get a lot of my ideas about color schemes and imagery. Alan told me he wanted *Evita* to be not only a glamorous musical, but also gritty and real. He wanted a lot of dust, and a feeling for the Pampas and the little Argentine towns in the Twenties and Thirties. That was what excited me the most, because I'm never interested in shooting something that's too polished and slick. Alan wanted the film to be 'Parkerized,' which is a term we came up with to describe the look. That concept led me to my plan in terms of color and contrast."

The duo briefly considered shooting the film in 65mm, but Parker rejected the notion because he "couldn't see any great advantage to it. I shoot really fast, and we were also using two cameras all the time. I didn't want the process to be cumbersome or slow, because the most important thing when I'm shooting a film is momentum. The best this film will look is a print from the original negative with digital sound, and I was never convinced that 65mm would be any better than that technically."

Parker and Khondji eventually agreed that anamorphic would be the best format for the film, for a variety of reasons. The cinematographer explains, "There are lots of flat landscapes in the film, as well as large gatherings of people. This movie was not going to be shot in Super 35, like the one I'm doing now [*Alien 4: Resurrection*], or some films I'd done before [*Seven, Stealing Beauty*]. I really like to change things around from picture to picture — the light, the glass, the lenses, the format.

"If you shoot in true anamorphic, it's not going to look the same as Super 35," he points out. "I think it's beautiful the way you lose depth of field in anamorphic; it makes the backgrounds look a bit like water. With Super 35 you have more depth of field, and the image is dryer. I would tend to use Super 35 if I wanted to do a more modern picture, or a more dynamic picture, and still keep the 2.35:1 ratio. It was a very good format for *Seven*, but true anamorphic works better for



period films, classical films, or for smaller pictures that don't have a hard, modern look."

Despite these sound arguments in support of anamorphic, Parker still had his reservations. "I agonized about going anamorphic because I'm a real traditionalist, and I love the 1.85:1 ratio," he says. "I've always avoided 'scope because it's harder to compose for really well. When it's done right, it can be wonderful — particularly when the film is gigantic and the canvas is very wide. I must say that when I looked at *Evita* in its finished form, I couldn't understand why I'd worried so much, because 1.85 might have diminished what we achieved."

"The anamorphic format worked very well on this film because I was trying to create a somewhat Impressionistic look [for the backgrounds]," submits Khondji. "A reference from painting on this movie was George Bellows, an American realist painter of the Twenties and Thirties. He was a realistic painter, but realistic in a way that was close to Impressionism. That style worked very well for the early scenes in *Evita*, which are more idealized; a lot of the film was shot through a glow of light and dust."

With the format decided, Khondji sought to fully exploit the opportunity to create picturesque

widescreen images. His first step was to procure the best possible set of anamorphic lenses. He received ample support from London's JD & C, a company owned and operated by Joe Dunton, BSC. "Joe provided us with two very beautiful sets of anamorphic Cooke lenses, which is a bit rare, because anamorphic lenses are not always so easy to get," notes Khondji. "I was very grateful. My camera assistant had done very thorough tests to find the best glass for the picture. The quality of the glass is the most important thing when I shoot a picture, because it's the glass that makes the image. This entire film was shot on Cookes, except for some scenes later in *Evita*'s life, when she becomes sick. I shot those darker moments with Zeiss lenses because I wanted a harsher, sharper look."

"In anamorphic, I love the 50mm and 70mm lenses very much, and also the 100mm," he says. "Wider shots in anamorphic give you a bit of deformation in the image; I really don't like to use wide lenses in anamorphic, especially if you have to pan or if you're shooting in a small room. I can't stand curvature in the image. It may work on certain types of films, but it would look vulgar in a film of this type. I don't like anything that pulls the spectator out of the movie. A film is really beautiful

Ché (Antonio Banderas) leads a revolution of the people. Khondji and B-camera operator Ted Adcock used handheld techniques to add a sense of urgency to the film's action scenes.

Top: Juan Perón's mistress (Andrea Corr) beseeches the impulsive politician. To emphasize the dualities within Perón and other characters, Khondji often cast the actors in a half-shadow by lighting them from the side. Bottom: The faces of Ché and Eva betray the turmoil of their nation. Sacrificing his preference for Chinese lanterns, Khondji adopted the methods of Parker's crew and lit most of the film, particularly close-ups, with a series of heavily diffused softboxes.

when the camerawork makes a strong statement by pushing in the same direction as what the director wants."

To make things convenient for the crew, which had been working extensively with Moviecam cameras, Khondji opted to shoot the picture with that system, even though he normally favors Panavision or Arriflex packages. Given Parker's rapid and mobile style of shooting, however, the lightweight Moviecam units proved to be an asset, allowing the cinematographer and his crew to set up quickly in the director's two-camera mode. Asked if the use of dual cameras played havoc with his lighting plans, Khondji offers, "From the very beginning I trusted Alan. He really helped me on this movie, and he was very respectful of the lighting. He always tried to put the cameras in the right direction for the light." To avoid complications, the two cameras were often set up close to each other, with the lenses set at different focal lengths.

Parker comments, "I've shot with multiple cameras before, but never on every single day of the shoot like this. You can only light for one line; the moment the other camera is on a different line, the light has to be compromised. I was very sensitive to Darius on that issue. The reason for the second camera is to have options, although sometimes it also helps in case of a mistake — a flare flying across the lens, or other things that can happen unexpectedly."

"Our primary camera was operated by Mike Roberts; the second camera was always a bonus, and if we thought it would compromise the lighting, we didn't shoot, or I would just tell Darius to shoot anyway and not worry, because we'd throw the footage away later. He'd look at me and say suspiciously, 'Yeah, right.'" Parker pauses to emit a throaty chuckle, then adds, "In other respects I just worked my normal way, and the

second camera became useful for things like the funeral scene, which involved 4,000 people, or scenes with 100 cavalrymen on horseback. For scenes like those you could set up six cameras to record everything, but I just them the same way I'd done everything else, with two cameras. I like to see what I'm getting, and I can't control six cameras at once."



wonderful it was to work on sets, and I began to wonder why we'd put ourselves through such aggravation. Billy Wilder used to live in Beverly Hills, and he'd get up in the morning, drive to the studio at nine, shoot and then go home and sleep in his own bed. Nowadays, we spend our lives in Holiday Inns, away from our families. But in the end, there is an honesty and truth to location shooting as long as you get it on film. That makes it worthwhile."

However, *Evita* generated its share of controversy in Argentina, where extremists staged demonstrations against the production. "The political aspect of the shoot was the most difficult thing to deal with," says Parker. "When we first arrived in Buenos Aires, they didn't want us there. It's hard to shoot when there's a demon-

stration against you just outside the door, but you've just got to block it out of your head."

Khondji recalls, "We shot a lot of controversial scenes in Budapest that we didn't want to do in Argentina because of the government and so on. We did end up staying in

Argentina longer than we had anticipated, because once we started shooting, the people there realized that we weren't doing a disrespectful movie. Still, even though the movie is a musical, it shows both good and bad aspects of Evita's life. As it turned out, the people in Argentina wanted us to stay longer, but we had already planned an elaborate shoot for Budapest, so we had to leave. The only people who were really against us were extreme right-wing Perónists. The great masses of people were really incredible; it was amazing to see thousands of people get so emotionally involved in the story we were telling."

The cinematographer is pleased to report that the filmmakers were able to exploit the qualities of both Argentina and Hungary to excellent effect. "The locations we picked were a mixture



Eva's spirit bursts forth in an exuberant interlude. Says Khondji, "I was not thinking, 'I'm shooting a musical.' I was thinking more that I was just shooting a romantic story."

of gritty reality and beautiful settings," he says. "Buenos Aires at certain times has a contrasty, backlit look, almost like in grading. It often just came out naturally without any tricks — shooting at the right time of day with all of the dust. We tried to shoot in warm daylight at the end of the afternoon. The ambience in Budapest is very 'early-century Europe,' and it matches very well with Argentina in terms of the architecture. In both places, it was important for us to understand that the light was going to be like a character in the film. Alan is a director who really understands that cinematography can be a strong part of telling the story. That sounds very obvious, but not all directors understand that.

"The big challenge in moving to Budapest was dealing with the difference in the light," he states. "The light in Buenos Aires is very white, strong and harsh, the way it is in New York. It's very warm and dusty there, and the buildings reflect the light; it's a very luminous place. When we arrived in Budapest, we found ourselves in a very blue-green, sad, wintery European atmosphere. I had anticipated the difference, but it was still tricky to make it all look

right. To help balance things out, I worked with Technicolor London, which is one of the best labs in the world. The two guys who really helped me were [sales manager] Bob Crowdey and the timer, Paul Swann. In addition to the lab work, I used filtering to balance the lighting between the two places. I used 85 and 81 filters combined, and I pushed the negative [mostly Eastman 5248 in Budapest] half or one stop to give it more saturation and density. Elsewhere on the film, I used the lightest Mitchell diffusion, as well as black and especially white Tiffen Pro Mists. I often used a combination of white Pro Mist and diffusion together with a net behind the lens — three layers of diffusion, but all of them very light. The most beautiful diffusion is behind the glass. Most of the time I work with a black net at the back."

Khondji mixed his stocks fairly frequently, depending on the situation. As Parker notes with a smile, "Darius is very fussy with the film stocks; he'd be changing them all the time. That's hard for someone like me, because I work very fast. I'd be ready to go and then I'd say, 'Oh no, they're changing the magazines again.'" Pausing for a quick laugh, he adds, "Later,

of course, when I saw the rushes, I knew Darius had been right."

Khondji, like any cameraman worth his salt, ripostes that the end justified the means. He details, "I used 45, 93 and 48 on the film. The 45 was for all the exteriors in Argentina, 93 for all the interiors, and 48 for background war scenes, controversial scenes, some interiors and overcast scenes. The 48 reacts very beautifully if it's pushed on overcast gray days. I don't need the pushing for the stop, I mainly need it for the look. It changes the image structure."

The cinematographer further enhanced the look of the film with what he terms "a new cocktail" of special processes, blending the anamorphic look with the ENR developing process and a carefully planned use of Arri's VariCon system to flash the film.

The Technicolor ENR system, as students of cinematography will know, was pioneered by Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC, and is named after Ernesto N. Rico, the technician who helped develop the process at Technicolor Rome. In a "normal" Eastman Color Print process, a latent image is developed both in silver metal and in dye (cyan, magenta and yellow) in the



A crowd of well-wishers surrounds the Peróns. Khondji's combined use of the ENR process and flashing helped create a distinctive, detailed look.

color developer solution. While the dyes must be retained for image projection, a main focus of the remainder of the process is to remove the silver image from everything but the optical soundtrack. This is accomplished through common bleaching and fixing baths. Normally, 100 percent of the silver is removed from the picture area.

In the Technicolor ENR process, a proprietary black-and-white developing bath is used at the appropriate stage of the process so that a portion of the silver can be retained in an image-wise manner, to the taste of the individual cinematographer. As Technicolor London's Bob Crowdey explains, "[The color positive] is basically put through a milder solution of pan developer. This greatly affects the shadow areas, making them more black. Cinematographers worldwide have always tried to get the blackest of black shadows; ENR gives the shadows a slight sheen, where a good shadow in normal developing has a sort of matte finish. It's a bit like when you've just gotten your shoes polished and they're nice and shiny. As a result, the rods in the viewer's eye will pick out this deep, deep shadow. ENR literally makes things more contrasty.

"With standard developing, the silver is removed completely from the finished print," Crowdey continues. "If you think

of normal print developing as 0 percent [silver], and complete bleach-bypass [which Khondji experimented with on *Seven*] as 100 percent, I would say that on *Evita* Darius was about 38 percent towards a bleach bypass. The ENR work is most noticeable in night scenes or in scenes involving large crowds. In *Evita*, it really enhances the depth and the contrast in crowds, and it also affects scenes involving ticker-tape, flags, bunting, things like that. For scenes in which military personnel are wearing dark uniforms, the ENR really makes their costumes zing out, creating contrast against their white bandoliers and other accoutrements. In essence, the result of the ENR is a more contrasty look, with a very slight desaturation in color, mainly in the pastel colors."

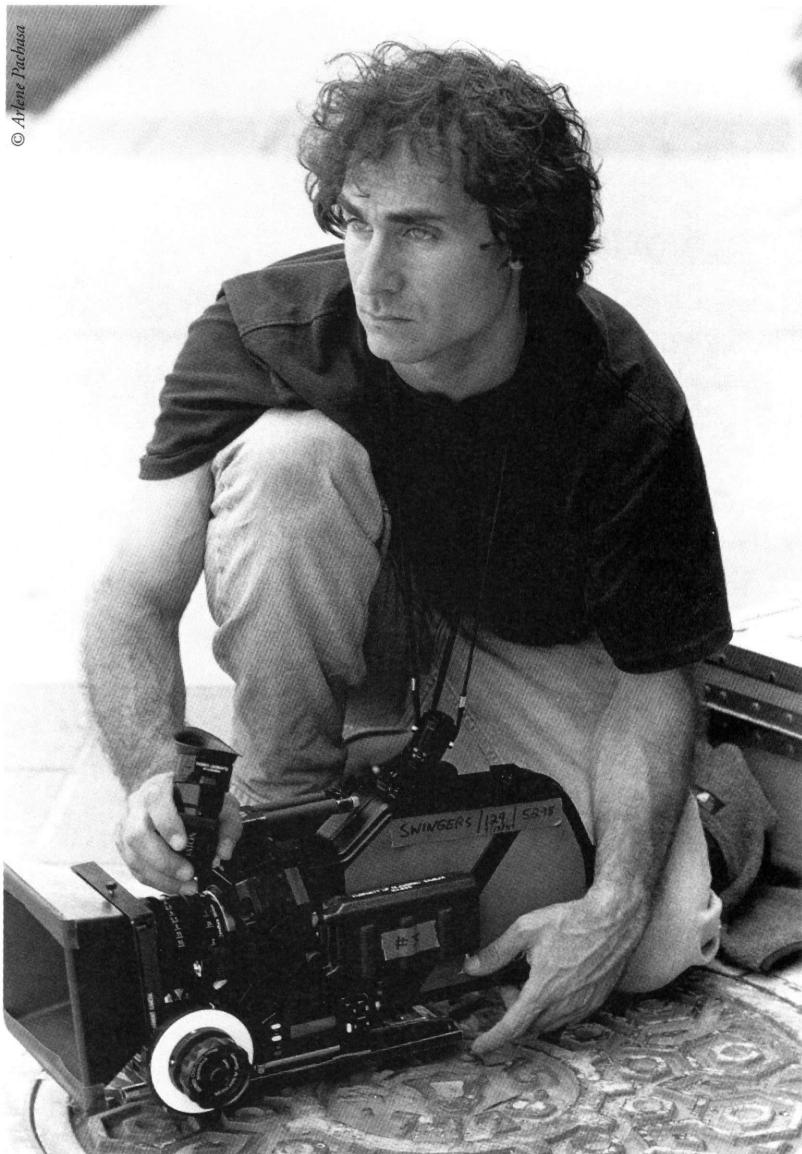
Notes Khondji, "I've used a color process on every movie I've done since my second picture. They have different names depending on the lab. I've used similar processes on *Before the Rain* (ENR, Technicolor London), *Stealing Beauty* (ENR, Rome) and *Evita* (ENR, London), and some different ones on *Delicatessen*, *The City of Lost Children* and *Seven*. It's the only way for me to really increase the contrast and play with the colors before moving on to digital postproduction. Most directors of photography go 100 percent when they use a color process, so it looks

like black-and-white, but I don't like to do that. ENR works on a scale of infrared, which affects the depth and thickness of the blacks. You vary the degree of infrared according to the picture. It's a process you can adapt to the type of film and visual style you're doing."

To ensure the proper balance for the film, Khondji and his cohorts at Technicolor London conducted a series of "straddle tests," many of which focused upon Madonna (with special regard to her facial tones, hairstyles and clothing) and the film's military costumes. Says Khondji, "I also had meetings with the production designer, Brian Morris; the costume designer, Penny Rose; the chief makeup artist, Sarah Monzani; and the chief hairstylist, Martin Samuel. They knew I was going to use a color process, and I explained to them how it would bring more contrast to the costumes, and how dark colors become almost black. If you want dark colors to survive, they have to be a little bit lighter, and the whites should be systematically off-white."

Khondji also flashed the film to lend certain scenes a more lyrical ambience. To accomplish this, he used Arri's VariCon, a compact, contrast-control system which slides into the dual filter stage closest to the lens of any regular 6.6" x 6.6" matte box. The VariCon differs from low-contrast filters in that it provides for a continuously adjustable contrast over the entire photometric range of the film without any loss of resolution, and without any effect on the highlights. It differs from standard flashing (pre- or post-exposure) of the negative in the lab or in the film camera magazine in that it adds a controlled, even amount of light during the exposure, and permits the cinematographer to set the desire contrast reduction while observing the results in the viewfinder, in relationship with the actual scenes to be photographed. The VariCon also provides for coloring of shadow areas in the image without affecting the highlights. This feature can be very helpful in situations when extreme contrast compression would result in extreme color desaturation. ➤

For his first feature, Doug Liman was looking for the 'ideal' camera. He made *Swingers* with the Aaton 35-III.



Doug Liman with the Aaton 35-III
Swingers ©1996 Miramax

Using a single Aaton 35-III from Clairmont Camera, he directed and photographed *Swingers* in just twenty-one days.

"If I could visualize the shot, I could capture it. With a traditional camera, you have to take the size of the camera into consideration when planning shots, or deciding the suitability of locations... When you have a camera this small, you don't have to tailor your shoot around the needs of the camera -- the blocking supports the performance rather than the physical limitations of the camera... With the Aaton35-III, I was able to shoot in a standard Airstream trailer and get all the shots I wanted, including dolly moves, without limiting the actors in any way. With any other camera, I couldn't have done it. Because of the compact size of the camera, as well as the instant change magazine, there is almost no down-time between set-ups and reloads. We could shoot as intensely as we wanted. If the actors wanted to roll, I could go with them."

Approximately 4,000 extras lent epic sweep to scenes of Eva Peron's funeral, filmed in Budapest. Khondji sought to exploit the city's natural melancholy, using harsh backlight to enhance shadows.



Crowdey explains, "*Evita* is a warmish-looking film by design—it's a look that suits both the period and the Argentinean setting. Darius flashed the film fairly consistently for scenes involving Madonna, who is in pastel dresses half the time. An example would be the scene in which she's distributing leaflets from the back of a train in sunlight. That's very different than the look of the funeral scene, which is lit quite normally. Basically, Darius created a warm, sunny feeling for scenes in which Evita was riding high. He flashed with a very pale lemon color, which edged most of the film toward a yellowish look. We later graded it to make it a more golden color. He changed his approach when things began to go downhill for *Evita*."

The cinematographer's lighting schemes also reflected his desire to infuse the film with a range of moods and tones. With his love of stark contrast, the cinematographer generally eschews fill light wherever possible, and *Evita* was no exception to the rule. "The architecture in the film is very early-century European, with lots of marble," Khondji notes. "I lit it

all with contrast on one side, but the contrast was still soft, with an extremely soft quality of light. Anamorphic by its nature is beautiful and kind of soft, and I could flash when I wanted to, so I didn't need much fill light; I used a lot of black screens and flags to eliminate fill. On this film it was always my goal to bring out the architecture with my lighting, but the light was always rather unidirectional. I wanted shadows that looked almost like brownish charcoal. I achieved that mainly by pushing the film and then flashing it to achieve a slight tone."

The director of photography found his "less fill" philosophy to be well suited to the natural lighting conditions he faced in Argentina. "I love using very natural light as much as I can. I don't re-light exteriors very much unless I'm doing a picture where I want a different look, or if I'm re-lighting exteriors with primary colors and then timing it in a different way. This film was more naturalistic because there were a lot of situations with very strong backlight. My concern was to play with the process and go into very deep shadows,

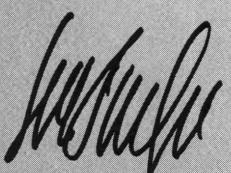
while still making the details visible. Because I used very little fill light, we were working with strong lighting ratios. Also, the dust was flashing the image a bit in a natural way."

When forced by circumstances to boost existing light levels, Khondji's strategy was fairly straightforward: for day exteriors, he used HMIs; for real interior day shots involving windows, he deployed large HMI sources, such as 12Ks or 18Ks; for other situations, especially interior stage setups and night scenes, he opted for incandescent fixtures. "The crew was fantastic; they really helped me with the setups," he says. "In addition to the camera operator, Mike Roberts, I had a fantastic gaffer in Peter Bloor. The rest of the team was also very good: the camera assistants, Bill Coe and Alan Butler; the grip, Colin Manning; and the second camera operator, Ted Adcock, contributed immensely."

Gaffer Bloor maintains that Khondji was "very brave" in adapting to the methods of Parker's crew. In addition to using the Moviecam system with which

ON
F I L M

"I wanted to be a painter, but switched to studying film in college, because I wanted to add the dimensions of movement and time to my pictures. I was an obsessive student of lighting, although I'm not a particularly technical person. Lighting is more of an instinctual thing. I let the story be my guide. My job begins with listening to the director. I'm very keen on preparation and planning. That's where the dreaming begins. During the first weeks when you're making a film, it takes on its own life. Something happens that you can't intellectualize or plan. There's a visual language that is a non-verbal part of filmmaking, and it speaks on a very strong emotional level. You have to be spontaneous and bold and be willing to take chances without being gratuitous. Every cinematographer has a unique way of seeing things. It's very difficult to get away from who you are. But that doesn't mean that you should stop learning. I consider myself a student for life. My aim is to be part of things that have a reason to be made. There's enough pulp out there."



Lisa Rinzler's narrative feature credits include *Lisbon Story*, *True Love*, *Gun Crazy*, *Menace 2 Society* and *Dead Presidents*. Her next release is *Trees Lounge*.

Lisa Rinzler

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they were familiar, the cinematographer also sacrificed his preference for Chinese lanterns, lighting most of the picture with a series of softboxes. As Bloor details, "We really had to keep going, and this system helped us to move quickly. The lightboxes we use are built from aluminum tubing welded together and attached to screens covered by a thick white diffusion called 129; these frames are then enclosed with Styrofoam. The boxes we used on *Evita* usually measured about eight feet by four feet, but you can make them any size you want. You can also clamp two or three of them together, or hang them up. For close-ups, we might place a Mini-Brute inside with 129 over that as well, creating a kind of double-double-diffusion. We often used very soft Brute bulbs that you can only obtain in America; they create a very lovely, natural-looking light. On longer shots, we'd use bigger lighting units within our boxes to create more punch."

Extra punch was certainly needed for the film's re-creation of Evita's famed address from the balcony of the presidential palace. After much haggling, the production finally convinced the Argentine government to allow the crew to film at the actual location. Recalls Khondji, "We were given the real balcony at the last moment. We only had one day's notice, so we had to light the scene in a very minimalistic way. I'd watched a lot of newsreels of Evita during her speech, and I tried to reproduce that documentary, gritty, real kind of lighting. Peter Bloor helped me by getting our cranes in exactly the right position."

In addition to using a Wendy light positioned fairly close to the palace, Bloor mounted masses of Maxi-Brutes on four cranes to provide the long throw required. The sequence was filmed over two nights; on the first, the filmmakers trained three cameras on the balcony, and on the second, they shot reverses aimed out at the crowd. Khondji and Bloor later matched the look of the exterior sequence while shooting close-ups of Madonna at Shepperton Studios, breaking the Wendy light's modu-

lar grid into four smaller units and placing them as far as possible from the stage.

Another of the film's massive sequences — Evita's funeral — allowed Khondji use his lighting for symbolic impact, to recall an earlier dream sequence of Evita and Ché dancing in the large, marble interior of a Budapest museum. "The dance is a very dreamy, extremely silhouetted sequence with almost no detail in the shadow areas," the cinematographer says. "It's very Impressionistic, with the characters isolated under a single 18K light placed above them. Later, for a funeral scene that takes place in the same museum, we lit in a similar fashion so the audience would recall the dance. We were mainly using one strong 18K on the coffin, with other 18Ks providing very soft fill. There were hundreds and hundreds of extras gathered, and they were almost in shadows except for this harsh light."

Adds Bloor, "For wide shots of the coffin, we took advantage of a line of windows in the building. We covered the windows with 129 and basically blew them out with Dinos mounted on towers outside. That gave us a hot beam of light which established a logical source for the single light you see on the coffin in closer shots. But the film is a musical, which gave Alan and Darius a bit of license to exaggerate things a bit and make them more dramatic — by using really heavy backlight with smoke and diffusion."

However, as Khondji continues, "We also did some exterior footage for the funeral, shot very clean with very little diffusion. We shot on one of the big avenues in Budapest over two days, and we had about 4,000 extras. We covered the scene mainly with two cameras, but sometimes with three, and we changed positions a lot. In real life, there were two separate funerals for Evita — one day was overcast and raining and the other was very, very sunny, and we actually had the same type of weather. That made our re-creation accurate, but we had a big challenge trying to make everything match. We had it backlit at certain

points, but then later it became completely overcast. The light kept on changing, and we shot a few things that weren't in perfect light. I had to trust Alan not to cut in shots that didn't match at all. I didn't re-light things to try to compensate, except on some closer shots where I used big lights."

The director of photography also used shadows to hint at the darker sides of the film's central characters. Khondji explains, "Each of the main actors was lit differently in individual shots. They all had their own way of taking the light the best. Madonna was lit in a more straightforward, glamorous light, but she actually takes different types of light quite well; she's very photogenic. *Evita* was a very generous person, but she also had a certain duality. I played with that in the way she was lit — straightforward, or from the side to create a more half-lit look. But I saw her as a more straightforward person, so the lighting was less extreme on her than on Jonathan Pryce, whom I often lit from the side. I did a lot of research on Juan Perón, and he also had a lot of duality, even more so than *Evita*. He was very generous with the people, but he was also a very clever, devious man. Subconsciously I began lighting him from the side, so that one side of his face was in darkness. He was more shadowy, maybe a bit like Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*, and I always used less diffusion on him. Antonio Banderas was also sidelit. I find that most men look better and stronger in this type of light."

Bloor notes that despite the film's epic scale, the toughest lighting setups were often smaller-scale scenes that focused on these characters. "One of the most difficult setups for any cinematographer to deal with is any scene involving more than two characters sitting around a table," he says. "You can't light it all perfectly, and someone is always going to lose out — especially if there's a track involved. But the toughest sequence in this picture was a shot of Madonna coming down this one particular staircase, which was quite large and had lots of pillars alongside it. She started out high

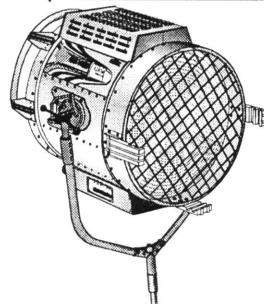
up on the staircase, with the camera in a low position and tracking backwards as she came down. Eventually she reached the bottom of the steps and moved into a close-up. It was one long shot, and it was hard to keep her looking nice all the way down. That situation was just a nightmare, and it took us about 2 1/2 hours to light it. We tried to find a different staircase, but we ended up having to shoot with the one we had.

"We had to keep the lighting even; we couldn't just put a light down the staircase and hope for the best," he details. "At the top of the stairs, we used some Mini-Brutes through light diffusion, and everything was heavily flagged to prevent excess shadows. We lit the middle part of the staircase with heavily diffused 5Ks, and we had the bottom area pre-rigged for her close-up."

Asked to sum up the strengths of the finished picture, director Parker is quick to salute Khondji and the rest of the crew for helping him to achieve his goal of an uncompromising period musical. "The scale of the film lent itself beautifully to anamorphic, and Darius' lighting was very daring and naturalistic. The grading toward a warm, amber feel also helped to create an authentic period feel," he says. "But the success of a film like this depends upon many other elements as well — particularly an attention to detail in costume design, props and art direction. Everyone who worked on this film contributed a great deal. I think the finished product is an interesting mixture of cinematic forms. It has elements of Impressionism, but it also has an incredible energy in the form of camera moves and handheld work. After being in this business for a while, you develop a box of tricks, and if you know all the tricks you should use them — as long as you don't overuse or draw undue attention to them."

Offering his own assessment of *Evita*, Technicolor's Bob Crowley submits, "This is one of the finest-looking films I've ever seen photographed, and I've been involved with timing for 30 years." ♦

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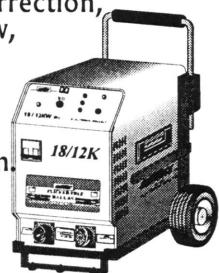


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In December of 1993, cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh received a phone call from director and fellow New Zealand native Jane Campion, who asked if he would like to photograph her next project for her project, an adaptation of Henry James' turn-of-the-century novel *Portrait of a Lady*. At the time, Campion did not have a completed screenplay, so she asked Dryburgh to take a look at the book. James is not an author usually included in school curriculums or read for leisure in New Zealand, and Dryburgh recalls being stunned by the densely written, 700-plus-page tale. Remarks the cameraman, "As you go along [reading it], you say to yourself, 'This is a really interesting story, with wonderful continental settings, but how are you going to transform this into a film?'"

Nevertheless, Dryburgh contacted Campion immediately after tackling the novel and agreed to shoot the picture. But he hastens to add, "I would commit to any project with Jane. I simply trust her judgment." His trust is well-founded. Dryburgh had, after all, shot Campion's two previous features, both of which were critically hailed: *An Angel at My Table* (1990), a powerful yet restrained biography of New Zealand writer Janet Frame; and *The Piano* (1993), the provocative tale of a mute 19th-century woman whose titular musical instrument is not only her "voice" but the elaborate expression of an otherwise thwarted Eros. *Angel* earned more than a dozen international awards, including the Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival; *The Piano* garnered more than 30 international awards, among them three Academy Awards, including the Oscar for Best Cinematography (amid a total of nine nominations), and the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or.

Dryburgh first met Campion while the two were toiling on a low-budget feature: he as the project's gaffer, and she as a third assistant director. "Jane was fairly demoralized by the whole process," he recalls with a laugh, "but we were all very helpful. We told her how to hold the 'stop/go' signs for the traffic and where to put up

Photos by Jürgen Teller, courtesy of Gramercy Pictures.

Painterly Touches

Cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh lends his impeccable eye to director Jane Campion's adaptation of Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady*.

by Ric Gentry

the road barriers. I think she got fairly tired of us being so forward with our attention."

In 1984, Campion graduated from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, where she had directed the critically acclaimed short films *Peel*, *Mishaps of Seduction and Conquest*, *Passionless Moments* and *A Girl's Own Story*. During the theatrical run of Campion's subsequent feature *Sweetie* (1989), the director took note of Dryburgh's black-and-white cinematography on *Kitchen Sink*, a surreal short film by Alison Maclean (*Crush*). Impressed, Campion hired him to photograph *An Angel at My Table*, and she has since continued to optimize his striking, evocative imagery with her sophisticated direction. Reflecting on Campion's evolution as a filmmaker, Dryburgh says, "I think she's become more ambitious with each film. She keeps exploring the full potential of the medium. Her talent with narrative has always been there. Even with her first film, it was clear that she knew how to tell stories and communicate powerfully with an audience."

While Dryburgh asserts that Laura Jones' 120-page screenplay is "very faithful" to the James novel, he is also quick to point out that *Portrait* is also very much an extension of themes that Campion has explored in her earlier films. As evidenced by *Two Friends* (1986), a bittersweet tale of lost adolescent friendship, and the droll, captivating *Sweetie*, Campion favors eccentric, isolated female protagonists who give voice to her intimate ruminations on the idiosyncrasies of everyday life. Though *Portrait* is true to its period setting, Dryburgh submits, "I think Jane sees [the protagonist] as a fairly timeless embodiment of the spirit of modern woman. But I wouldn't say that Jane is so much an ardent feminist as an instinctual one; she's not driven by any particular agenda."

Portrait of a Lady focuses

on Isabel Archer (Nicole Kidman), an idealistic young American woman, orphaned in childhood, who is visiting relatives in England. After declining marriage proposals from several wealthy patrician suitors, an unexpected inheritance from her dying uncle (John Gielgud) provides her with financial independence. Later, Isabel meets Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich) in Florence and, after a subsequent year of travel and contemplation, agrees to marry him. Taking advantage of Isabel's acquired affluence, the couple move to a magnificent Renaissance palazzo in Rome, where Isabel begins to perceive her husband's dissembling, Machiavellian nature. She finds a parallel of herself in Osmond's acquiescent teenage daughter (the product of a previ-

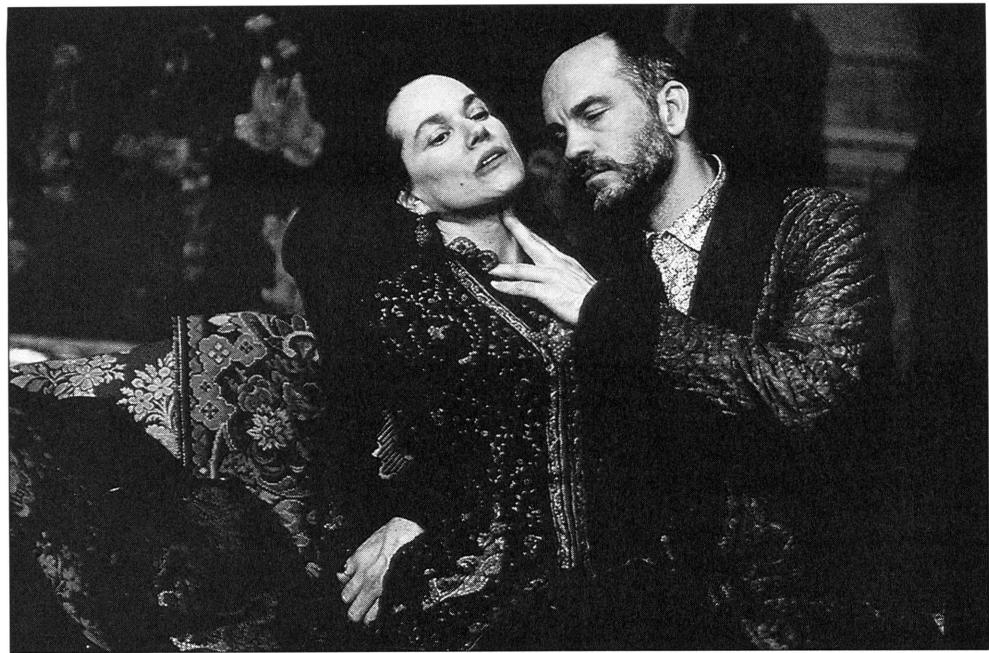
ous romantic liaison), whom he tries to manipulate into a marriage of wealth and power, rather than allowing her to find true fulfillment with a young man of lesser status whom she truly loves. Isabel soon finds herself torn between marital duty and her desire for independence.

Dryburgh's naturalistic cinematographic style emphasizes source lighting emanating from windows and other practical origins. Given the sensual use of light and alluring color in *An Angel at My Table* and *The Piano*, it's surprising to learn that the interiors for both of those films were shot primarily on New Zealand soundstages. "Locations are extremely important in Jane's films," Dryburgh says, "in that they provide the visual key and context, but the location photography [on *Angel* and *Piano*] was intercut with stage interiors." Ostensibly, *Portrait* was meant to be shot the same way, but a preliminary European scout convinced Campion to shoot both interiors and exteriors on location. The cinematographer explains, "There was such a sense of history and sumptuous detail about the places, as well as this incredible sense of atmosphere — which, of course, would never have been possible to achieve on a set."

The film was shot over 13

Opposite page:
American expatriate
Isabel Archer
(Nicole Kidman)
with her domineering husband Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich).
This page left:
Dryburgh with a
35mm Nikon
still camera
(loaded with
Kodak 5293
stock) which he
used to
evaluate the
exposures for
the naturally-lit
interiors of
Rome's Palazzo
Taverna. Below:
Heale House in
Salisbury,
England served
as the Touchett
family's stately
manor. Notes
Dryburgh of the
locale, "There's
a sort of purity
in the snow
which echoes
the resolution
of the story
quite well."





Above: Osmond torments his prior paramour Madame Merle (Barbara Hershey) with such ferocity that she, in turn, casts her conniving influence upon the naive Isabel. **Right:** Faced with Isabel's threat to leave Italy to visit her dying cousin in England, Osmond subjects his wife to one final manipulative stand.

weeks, from mid-August to mid-November of 1995. Interiors were filmed at some of the most grandiose and opulent sites in all of Europe: Heale House in Salisbury outside of London; the Palazzo Farnese in Florence and the Palazzo Pfanner in nearby Lucca; the Palazzo Sacchetti, an architectural milestone; and the primary location, the Palazzo Taverna in Rome. Despite all of these picturesque locales, *Portrait* is not a film rife with majestic, postcard compositions. "The emphasis in *Portrait of a Lady* is very firmly on the characters and the narrative, and the style of shooting reflects that," Dryburgh says. "So although you get the texture, you are very rarely rewarded with a sumptuous wide shot, and that's quite a conscious choice on the part of Jane and myself. There are a couple of wide shots, but we've been very stingy with them."

Portrait was filmed in the Super 35 format to achieve a 2.35:1 frame, as Dryburgh had done on John Sayles' recent *Lone Star* (see Points East, AC June '96). He even obtained the same set of lenses from Panavision that he had used on that earlier project. "The anamorphic format offers you the advantage of lenses that are inherently sharper, but the lenses are quite slow, and also have a lot less depth of focus. To shoot what would be a



20mm field-of-view on Super 35, you would use a 40mm or thereabouts in anamorphic; you're immediately using a longer lens, with the problems that creates for depth of field."

Dryburgh shot *Portrait* almost exclusively with long lenses, most notably a trio of Panavision Primo zooms: 17.5-75mm, 24-275mm, and 135-420mm. "They enabled us to move more quickly and to give the actors a lot of freedom of movement," says the cinematographer. "A lot of the movie was shot at very long lengths — 100mm, 200mm — which tends to isolate the characters and put the background out of focus. You're only seeing a very small portion of the background, maybe a six-foot square. It becomes sort of a medley of color, texture, light and shade. The emphasis is on the characters rather than what's behind or

around them." Due to the extraordinary sharpness of the Primos, Dryburgh added slight Tiffen Pro Mist diffusion throughout the film. "We wanted to soften the images a bit and allow the highlights to flare a little. We used the quarter and half Pro Mists a lot, but that was because of the length of the lenses."

The camera is in a state of constant motion throughout the film, as virtually every shot was executed on a dolly. Ironically, there is no sense of "portrait photography" in the illustrative sense. Likewise, there are no conventional master shots with encroaching coverage, but rather choreographed camera moves that indirectly establish a sense of the environment. In the protracted Steadicam introduction to Isabel and Osmond's magnificent

Rome quarters, for example, the camera observes Osmond at a medium distance as he paces through a series of interconnected rooms, examining the arrangements in each just prior to a large social reception.

"The camera movement is partly used to contemporize the film, and perhaps to break from the conventions of the period film," Dryburgh explains. "Jane sees this as quite a modern story and therefore felt that it should be quite modern in its treatment. But we also kept the camera moving in order to maintain a sort of emotional restlessness and a sense of not being quite sure of what is going on. This is often the case in the second half of the film, when Isabel is trying to untangle the enigma of her marriage."

Dryburgh notes that Campion's visual plan demanded that he and his crew execute complex dolly shots with long lenses in spaces that had extreme contrast ranges. Given the intricacy of the film's blocking, Dryburgh holds high praise for operator Nigel Willoughby, first assistant/focus puller Ted Morris and key/dolly grip Colin Manning. "There were a

Working the SwingShift with Ericson Core.

When cinematographer Ericson Core heard *Century Precision* was manufacturing and selling the new *Clairmont SwingShift Lens System*, he bought the first one—and used it extensively to shoot *187*, a Warner Bros. feature directed by Kevin Reynolds. Starring Samuel Jackson, *187* is a dark psychological portrait of an urban school teacher. Here Ericson describes how the *SwingShift*'s view camera-style tilts, shifts, and swings helped tell the story.

"The conversation I kept having with Kevin Reynolds was: How do we force the viewer's eye to a certain visual element? The *SwingShift*'s ability to precisely control depth of field enabled me to isolate regions within the frame, to draw the eye to a particular area of the subject. In classroom scenes, tilting the lens one way produced a roiling sea of students, an almost indistinguishable mass. And then a row of students half-way back would begin to come into focus. By combining swings and tilts, I could isolate one person to reinforce the emotional intensity of a gesture or look. It's a very powerful tool."

"The *SwingShift* system was crucial in showing the acute alienation of Samuel Jackson's character. By using selective focus, we help the viewer feel his loneliness and isolation."

"With these lenses, areas outside the focal plane are not just unsharp, but seem almost textured with brushstrokes. It's a very beautiful, painterly effect—dramatically underscoring the emotions in a scene."

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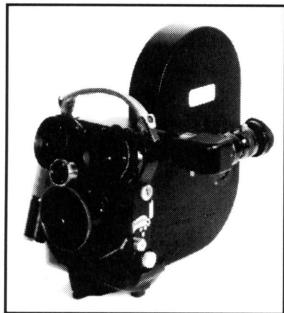
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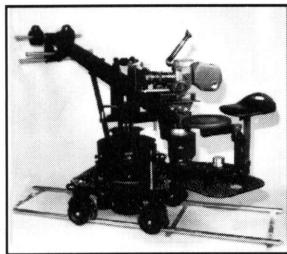
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lot of different marks to hit, because often we would run a three-page scene in one shot, although not necessarily to use it as a single piece of film. Typically, we would shoot on a 20-foot track that ran along one axis of the room on one actor, perhaps with other actors wandering around. Then we'd lay another 20-foot track at right angles to favor the other actor. As the actors moved around, there was a lot of restless pacing with people circling each other. We did a lot of this type of thing with Osmond, so we needed to keep moving and shifting to different viewpoints.

"We did rehearsals just for focus and movement," Dryburgh continues, "but once actors hit the full energy of the performance, the parameters shift a little bit. They're sometimes six inches off their marks, but you don't want to demand that they hit their marks above all else; you want their performances to have a freedom and a fluidity. Jane is very keen to let the actors have a bit of free reign, and I think that's completely correct.

"Another particular challenge of a costume drama is that women wear long dresses with quite broad hems, which sometimes means that whether the actress is on her mark or not is irrelevant, because no one can see the mark anyway. We also had scenes with 20 or 30 people in room, and we might find ourselves using a 200mm lens to shoot someone who was 20 feet away with 12 marks to hit. Jane would say, 'Just go for it and I'll use the bits that work.'

"I knew I could trust Jane and [editor] Veronika Jenet to do that. Some editors will use soft shots if they happen to be the best performance. But Veronika is very technically demanding, and will do anything to avoid a shot that is soft, or that, in her mind, is technically substandard. Knowing that, we could relax and do maybe eight takes, even though some of them weren't going to be sharp. I was confident that I wouldn't see those takes in the

movie, and I was right."

The use of long lenses and a moving camera were just part of an intricate visual strategy that also works "to reflect the emotional content of each scene," says Dryburgh, who last summer did technical assessments of the locations while Campion held script rehearsals in London. "Stylistically, I wanted to continue with the idea of working with naturalistic light sources as often as possible.

"Stylistically, I wanted to continue with the idea of working with naturalistic light sources as often as possible."

— Stuart Dryburgh

The challenge was that each of the buildings we used had a 40-foot-high ceiling, with paintings and frescoes and plasterwork. A lot of the wall surfaces were decorated with historic and very fragile artwork and filigree dating from maybe four centuries ago. As a result, we couldn't use any nails, or attach lights to anything."

To solve this logistical problem, Dryburgh and New Zealand gaffer Don Jowsey decided to construct scaffolding outside each edifice, creating a building-length gantry from which lights could be directed through windows. "That strategy enabled us to work without resorting to individual towers and cherrypickers and Condors, which are a little unwieldy," Dryburgh comments. "Instead, Don's crew could just hop straight out the window and move a light across the gantry, which was four feet below the level of the windows; we had our basic lights on tall stands. It was very easy for the electricians to make quick adjustments. On the day of the shoot, when we entered a room, everything was already cabled up, and the lights were basically set. It then merely became a matter of starting the generators and hitting the switches."

The film's biggest lighting endeavor was the illumination of the primary location: Rome's Palazzo Taverna, a four-story,

120'-high, walled-off Renaissance-era structure with four wings, a profusion of archways and alcoves, and massive rooms with a typical area of 1,600 to 3,200 square feet—all of which were sumptuously adorned with huge paintings, towering marble statues and antique furniture. On the second floor, where most of *Portrait* was shot, 18 14' x 6' windows faced the courtyard in eight continuous rooms that represented the Osmonds' residence. Other magnificent wings, chambers and stairwells were also included as part of the residence, or to stand in for other Roman locations for the film.

The scaffolding in the courtyard for these scenes measured 40' high and 120' across. Despite the number of windows at the Taverna, Dryburgh had little difficulty determining his basic lighting package. "I knew I would need a 12K HMI Fresnel, a 6K Par and a 4K Par for each of them," he recalls, "so I multiplied that by 18 and added a number of smaller units to fill things out if I needed to. It was pretty simple in that respect, but it was quite a lot of equipment."

Once the units and the scaffolding configurations had been established and the required permits were being processed (a three-month ordeal involving "an enormous bureaucratic machine"), Dryburgh returned to each location with several 35mm Nikon still cameras loaded with the tungsten-balanced, 200 ASA Kodak 5293 stock that he would be using to shoot the film's interiors. One purpose of this exercise was to evaluate the natural light in each setting. "I wanted to see how the natural light related to each exposure, how much detail I would find in the walls and the texture of things once I balanced it with the windows. The natural light in these places is stunning; it's often very bright and glowing. But what I discovered with the still camera was that I needed to shoot at an eighth of a second at f2.8 to achieve the necessary exposure, which is what led me to realize that I had to boost the intensity of the daylight. I wanted to keep the same shape of the light—in other words, the strong light

from the windows—but I had to increase its level [usually up to three stops]. I don't think we ever shot purely in the natural light. But without exception, we were always striving to emulate it.

"There was no formula," Dryburgh continues. "Every scene had something that had to be worked out. We would have the key lighting through the windows or through doorways, and then fill light coming off the floor, which had a beautiful wax patina, and then a little bit at eye level on the actors. We were often working very close to the actors' faces. We wanted to maintain contact with the audience through the faces of the performers, and you can't pursue naturalism in that situation to the exclusion of the performance.

"But for me the key question was usually, 'Where can I hide lights?'. Sometimes you can hide sources behind furniture or below the bottom of the frame line. But on this picture we wanted to give the performers as much freedom of movement as possible, so we couldn't clutter things up. Again, we were on practical sets, so we couldn't fly out a wall, and we couldn't fill the set with too many C-stands and sheets of polystyrene and flags and covers. It was a puzzle every time. The light that floods the rooms [in the Taverna] is strong sunlight that falls off very fast. If someone was standing at the window, they were brightly illuminated; if they were six feet away, they'd start to go into shadow; and if they were on the other side, we'd go into blackness

photographically. It was a difference of about four stops in a matter of 25 feet."

The actors were often situated in a part of the room in which



Osmond and his acquiescent daughter Pansy (played by Italian actress Valentina Cervi) greet Isabel in the devious dilettante's ornate sitting room.

there was little or no exposure. Says Dryburgh, "What I would try to do—and this is where I would try to influence the blocking, not always successfully—is to keep the light on the dark side of the room, more behind the actors. Essentially, the side of their faces that was more toward the camera would remain dark. But they would be defined by backlight or three-quarter backlight from the windows. Sometimes we'd even silhouette them against the windows. We were really pursuing the edge of darkness there."

"I don't relish making the comparison, but my approach was inspired by Dutch masters like

Isabel pauses for a midday reverie within the ancient archway of an Italian palazzo.



Rembrandt or Vermeer — the way they would use natural light, with subjects and delineations and objects at the far end of the source decreasingly exposed. We actually looked at quite a few examples of that sort of art for the quality of the light. In terms of cinematic lighting, that sort of soft and directional approach is something I have always liked."

Another setting with an equally extreme exposure range was an underground chamber at the Palazzo Farnese in the town of Caprarola, where Osmond proposes to Isabel. "This is a very beautiful and famous palazzo that would have been used by one of the wealthy aristocratic Roman families as their country stronghold," says Dryburgh. "But it has this wonderfully circular, rather doughnut-shaped space about 30 feet beneath the courtyard. In this circle, located essentially on the basement level of the building, are about a dozen gratings evenly

spaced up above. In the middle of the day, the sunlight comes down through these gratings and creates these wonderful, very intense shafts of vertical light, which then reflect around the interior.

"As with the natural light elsewhere, we wanted to emulate this look. The trick to it, though, was that the sun only comes into the place for about half an hour in the middle of the day. Don Jowsey and his crew had their work cut out for them to match the intensity of the sunlight through the gratings at that time. They did it with 6K Par lights and mirrors overhead.

"When the actors walked into the shafts of light, they were very overexposed, almost 'flary' in their skin tones," notes Dryburgh, who once again had a four-stop difference between exposure extremes. "Once they moved out to the edge of a shaft of light, that would be a kind of a correct exposure; they would get the ambient light bouncing off the walls and the

floor. As they moved further away, they went into shadows."

The other purpose of Dryburgh's still photographs was to conduct experiments with filters. Following a practice begun during their previous collaborations, Campion and Dryburgh devised a very precise structure for color temperature, or what Dryburgh calls "a color gradient," which would demarcate four stages of the film to correspond with Isabel's emotional progress. These stages would also loosely reflect the four seasons of the year. "The story starts in the warm rich tones of an English summer, with a lot of green," says Dryburgh. "The opening scenes take place under a very lush green tree. We used a very pale green fluorescent correction filter instead of an 85. This is when Isabel is most idealistic and impressionable, with the whole world before her in all of its fertility and potential.

"In the scenes shot at the Florentine villas, which are more romantic, we were trying to emulate the strong late afternoon sunlight, so we used warm filters — usually a four or five coral — to enrich the look. A coral filter makes the greens go sort of yellow-green, and takes a lot of blue out of the scene. I prefer the coral to using an 85B, which gives things more of a red tone.

"The winter scenes in Rome have a blue tone, which is very abrupt, since it's suddenly three years later, after Isabel's marriage to Osmond. The look is almost monochromatic, with very strong blacks and skin tones tending toward the white. Most of the interiors there were shot using just an 81B, which is only a partial correction, so the light has a coldness to it. Given the condition of Isabel's marriage, the look reflects not just the cold of winter but the coldness of the emotional environment. Still, it wasn't as blue or as cold as the forest scenes in *The Piano*, where we shot on tungsten-balanced film without an 85 and then added a blue filter as well."

Dryburgh rigorously strove to visually interpret each individual color sequence with light; his approach depended upon

both the emotional tone of the scene and the options offered by the particular location. One example arises during a scene in which Osmond's adolescent daughter has just been returned to him from a convent boarding school. This is his first appearance in the film, and occurs just prior to his introduction to Isabel by a mutual friend, the mysterious Madame Merle (Barbara Hershey). As Osmond stands within the threshold of his apartment, speaking with two nuns, his daughter is seen collecting flowers beyond the door in the garden. "Again, there's a terrific contrast in light level between the two areas," Dryburgh says. "You have this innocent little girl out in the garden — the meeting point of the doorway which is at the edge between light and shadow — and then the rich, textured darkness of Osmond's own space within the same shot. The daughter, Pansy, is in a way a creature of light, while Osmond is of the darkness. His apartment is a precursor to the room he will have at the grand house in Rome. His areas are always dark, textured and just barely lit."

"With such shots, the trick lies in finding the right balance between the brightness of the exterior and the darkness of the interior. You can still see details in his area, such as art, sculpture, relics and a collection of eclectic wares. It's a matter of trying to stretch the film as far as it will go, and balancing it out at the same time, adding fill light to the dark areas, and letting the exterior overexpose. Success in this type of situation depends upon making a good judgment about what the film can handle at either end of its contrast range."

To evaluate exposure, Dryburgh prefers to establish a fixed set of printing lights (always in the high 20s or low 30s) in preproduction tests to which all dailies will be subjected, a method he has dubbed "one light." The cinematographer explains that this technique "helps me produce a more consistently exposed negative, rather than having the laboratory [in this case, Technicolor London] adjust the printing lights every day. If there is any kind of

difficulty with the exposure, I ask the lab to make a second print of the dailies, a 'mute roll,' just to reassure everyone that what we have is eminently printable."

Two kinds of special visual effects were used for *Portrait of a Lady*. The first was rather rudimentary, worthy perhaps of George Méliès, but no less effective than state-of-the-art techniques. The effect was devised while the crew was executing a group shot involving a dolly move in a café near Lucca. The move took the camera around a counter and through a 4' x 3' cabinet that happened to feature half-inch beveled glass edges. "The camera fell across the glass edges, and we thought that maybe we could use a longer lens to emphasize the effect. The cinematic aberration or prismatic effect was strong, but it didn't seem to interfere with the colors. The glass itself was pretty pure, and the displaced [or second] image in the prism tended to be a little softer and not as optically sound. As we looked through the glass, particularly with a long lens, we saw a double image. Jane was very taken by the effect. I think it implies a displacement of the spirit, or a sense of alienation. It's also visually very arresting. We wound up purchasing the cabinet from the café, and we used it in a number of places for a purely visual effect. It became a recurring theme."

The film's other effects method involved bluescreen composites, shot at Shepperton Studios, depicting several of Isabel's dreams, and a montage of a year-long journey that she takes with Madame Merle just after receiving her inheritance. "The women are shown boarding ships and hauling luggage through Europe, the Middle East and North Africa," Dryburgh details. "We settled on doing it in the studio with foreground and midground sets against bluescreen, a mixture of film opticals and CGI interface work conducted by a company called Peerless. I found that sequence to be very interesting to do, because I hadn't previously done much in this area of special effects."

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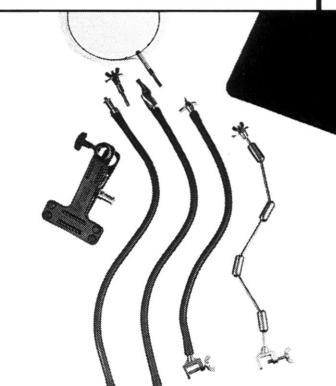
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Tragedy of Epic Proportions

Cinematographer Alex Thomson, BSC and actor/director Kenneth Branagh render *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's classic tale of vengeance, in 65mm.

by Bob Fisher

To shoot in 65mm, or not to shoot in 65mm?

That is the question Irish filmmaker Kenneth Branagh (*Henry V*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Dead Again*, *Frankenstein*) posed to himself while preparing his \$14 million screen adaptation of William Shakespeare's classic tragedy about a Danish prince driven to dementia by the desire to avenge his slain father. When the director did indeed decide to work in the large format, *Hamlet* became only the third dramatic feature to be filmed in 65mm over the past 25 years — the others were *Far and Away* (directed by Ron Howard and photographed by Mikael Salomon, ASC) and *Little Buddha* (directed by Bernardo Bertolucci and photographed by Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC), the latter of which actually juxtaposed 65mm and anamorphic 35mm sequences.

The 65mm format had its heyday from 1952 through 1970 with such expansive films as *Oklahoma*, *My Fair Lady*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Cleopatra*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Ben Hur*, *The Sound of Music*, *How the West Was Won*, *Dr. Zhivago*, *Ice Station Zebra*, *South Pacific* and *Ryan's Daughter*, among others.

Widescreen formats have existed since the earliest days of

cinema; the idea was to attract larger audiences by creating a more engrossing experience. In 1907, George Eastman and Thomas Edison agreed on a de facto 35mm standard which simplified the broad distribution of films. By the mid-to-late Twenties, all of the major studios were producing wide-format films again with pro-

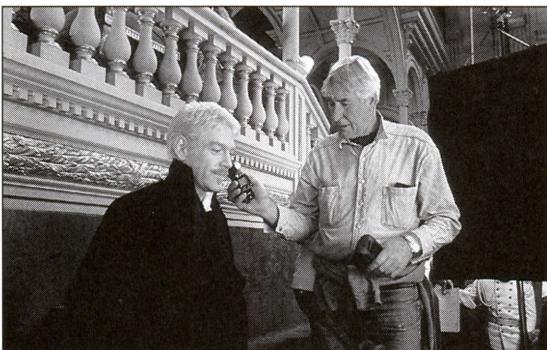
Photos by Rolf Konen and Peter Mountain, courtesy of Castle Rock Entertainment.



released on 70mm prints; the extra five millimeters contained the magnetic-stripe soundtrack.

A number of factors combined to end that trend. A deep recession put cost pressures on film production, at a time when the new multiplexes were being sliced into smaller screens. However, the biggest reason for the end of the 70mm trend was the invention of high-quality anamorphic lenses by Panavision. When combined with vast improvements in film quality and 35mm camera mobility, it became possible to produce films in the 35mm anamorphic format, and release high-quality 70mm prints in the most lucrative markets.

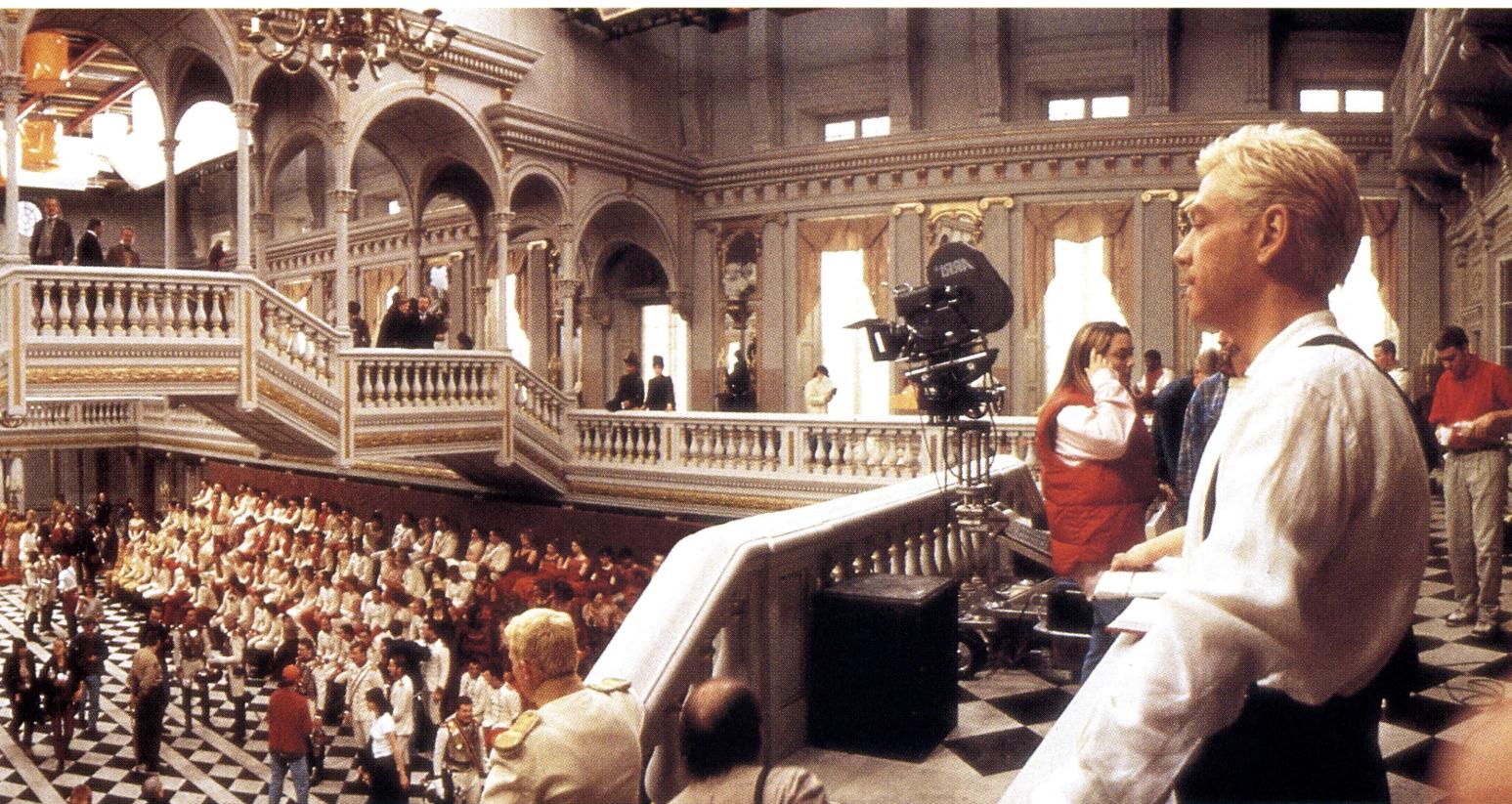
During the early Nineties, Panavision, Arriflex and Cinema Products introduced modern 65mm camera systems, in the belief that it would lead to a renaissance in large-format filmmaking. This never came to pass, since advances in digital stereo sound systems have eliminated half of the reason for releasing movies in 70mm: until the emergence of digital audio technology, the only way to deliver stereo surround-sound to cinemas was on a 70mm print with a mag-



prietary systems, including Natural Vision (63.5mm), Fox Grandeur (70mm), Vitascope (65mm), Realife (65mm) and others. However, the economic depression of the Thirties led to shelving of wide formats because of the high costs entailed by both the production process and the outfitting of movie houses with special projectors.

The next spurt of wide-format production began in 1952, when the film industry's proceeds began to decline due to the allure of free television. Hollywood moguls tried to stem the tide with 3-D productions, and Cinerama, before settling on CinemaScope. Most of these were produced in 65mm and

Cinematographer Alex Thomson taking a light meter reading of director/star Kenneth Branagh.



netic audio track.

Branagh's rendering of *Hamlet* is the fourth to be brought to the silver screen: the first adaptation featured an Oscar-winning performance by Sir Laurence Olivier (who also served as the 1948 film's director) and was photographed by Desmond Dickinson, BSC; the 1969 version was directed by Tony Richardson, shot by Gerry Fisher, BSC and starred Nicol Williamson in the eponymous role; in 1990, director Franco Zeffirelli and cinematographer David Watkin, BSC tackled the tragedy with Mel Gibson portraying the vengeful prince. The new version offers an intriguing international cast that includes Branagh in the title role, Derek Jacobi, Gerard Depardieu, Jack Lemmon, Richard Briers, Julie Christie, Kate Winslet, Charlton Heston, Brian Blessed, Rosemary Harris, Billy Crystal, Robin Williams, Sir John Gielgud and Judi Dench.

Branagh's *Hamlet* contains the complete text of Shakespeare's nearly 400-year-old play, giving the film a running time of three hours and 58 minutes. (An abridged 35mm print has also been cut for

the film's wide release.) The director did stray slightly from authenticity by updating its era to an unspecified year in the 19th Century. Notes the film's director of photography, Alex Thomson, BSC, "It's a flattering and interesting look — I think that's why Ken chose that period. If you staged this film in medieval times, it would have been too dark, and difficult to sustain the mood for almost four hours. To that end, we used some light grays with a lot of gold trim on costumes. I also tried to lift the whole picture up by keeping it quite bright, instead of being dark and moody all the time."

Raised in London, Thomson took his first crack at the film industry as a teenager by applying for a job at director David Lean's production company, The Cine Guild. "They made marvelous pictures, including *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*," Thomson recalls. "They asked what I wanted to do. I knew they used cameras, and so I told them I wanted to work in the camera department. They introduced me to the man who ran the camera department. He didn't have anything for me,

but said I should try again the next week. I phoned him every week for two years until he finally said, 'Okay, you start on Monday.'"

Thomson started as a clapper boy (working for Freddie Young, BSC on his first film) and worked his way through the ranks of the crew system. Thomson recalls being influenced by the "marvelous cinematographers" working at the studio, but he didn't really begin thinking about composition and lighting as forms of artistic expression until he became a camera operator. He spent six years operating for Nicolas Roeg, one of the relatively few cinematographers who has also excelled as a director. In 1968, Thomson earned his first feature credit as a director of photography on Clive Donner's comedy *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*.

Says Thomson, "When I first started lighting, I asked myself, 'What would Nick [Roeg] say or do in this situation?' Eventually, you gain confidence and evolve. I pride myself on the fact that every film I've shot has been different. The only consistency is that I always try to complement the story."

Branagh
surveys the vast
expanse of
Elsinore
Castle's palatial
hall, which
occupied two
complete
stages at
Shepperton
Studios.
The majority of
Hamlet takes
place in this
gargantuan
antechamber,
which
measures some
250 feet in
length.



Above: *Hamlet* seeks counsel from Marcellus (Jack Lemmon) and Horatio (Nicholas Farrell) in the forest of Elsinore after encountering his slain father's ghost. Filmed on a small set (60' x 100'), this scene's moonlight and firelight were simulated with a blue 82C filter and a full CTO gel, respectively.

Far right: During a rehearsal, Branagh observes actor Derek Jacobi (as King Claudius) reacting to the death of his character's wife, Queen Gertrude (Julie Christie).

With more than 50 films on his resumé, Thomson's feature credits also include *Excalibur* (for which he received an Oscar nomination), *The Keep*, *Labyrinth*, *Legend*, *Track 29*, *Leviathan*, *The Rachel Papers*, *The Krays*, *Alien³*, *Cliffhanger*, *Demolition Man*, *Black Beauty* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

According to Thomson, the decision to shoot *Hamlet* in 65mm occurred after he was brought onto the project, some three weeks before production got underway. Branagh didn't disclose his rationale for choosing the format, but he did seek out his cinematographer's opinion. "Ken asked what I thought, and it was an easy question to answer. Any cinematographer would be absolutely over the moon to shoot in 65mm, because it's the best image you can get on film. Most of the vision for translating *Hamlet* to film came straight out of Branagh's fertile imagination. He drew sketches of the sets and handed them over to production designer Tim Harvey, who took it from there."

Thomson submits that composing images in 65mm is virtually the same as shooting anamorphic 35mm. The latter has a 2.35:1 width to height aspect ratio, while the 65mm frame is 2.2:1.

Recounts Thomson of his previous encounters with 65mm, "I was the second camera operator

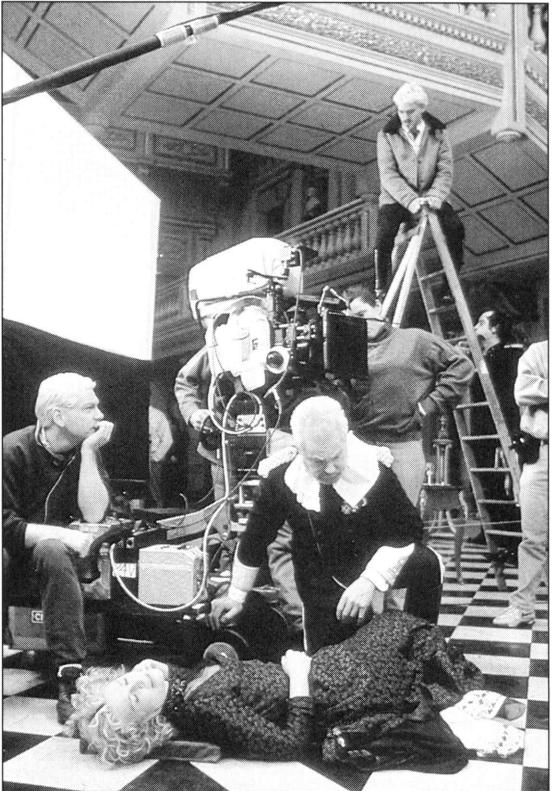
when Nick Roeg was shooting second unit on *Lawrence of Arabia*. And years before that I was the focus puller on *The Scent of Mystery*, which Jack Cardiff, BSC directed. It was shot in Todd-AO 65." (Thomson was once set to shoot a screen adaptation of the Joseph Conrad novel *Nostromo* in 65mm, but the project's director, David Lean, died mere weeks before production was scheduled to begin.)

As he was working on *Scent of Mystery*, Thomson recalls, "We were told by Mike Todd never to get closer than the waist, because of his concern about lack of depth. But on *Hamlet*, we tracked right into huge close-ups of heads. We've got inserts of mouths and eyes. We took a lot of chances, and it paid off. There is nothing you can't do with today's faster films and the better glass in Panavision's new lenses."

On *Hamlet*, the cinematographer used the full range of avail-

able Primo lenses—50, 75, 100, 120 and 150mm; Thomson explains that the focal length of a 75mm lens on a 65mm camera is approximately the same as that of a 150mm spherical lens on a 35mm camera. Camera operator Martin Kenzie, (who recently worked with cinematographer David Johnson, BSC on Oliver Parker's recent rendition of *Othello*), favored the 150mm lens for close-ups. Also aiding Thomson on *Hamlet* were his daughter, Chyna, who served as A-camera first assistant and has now worked on her father's past 15 pictures; B-camera operator Nic Milner, assisted by Robert Binnall; gaffer David Moroni; and grip David Appleby.

Though Thomson had very little preparation time, he did manage to shoot some tests with



longer lenses to determine how much light would be needed for realistic depth of field. Because the area of a 65mm frame is more than four times greater than that of a 35mm frame, the wider format records a higher-fidelity image with much more clarity and definition. "That demands crisp depth of field, because the slightest softness

Bert Dunk is happy hunting down a jet engine or an image.



FujiFilm gives him the time.

On location, Bert Dunk counts on FujiFilm's reliable performance to steal moments away from the camera. Then this Director of Photography can prowl through aviation surplus yards in search of another jet engine. He already has six -- including the 300-pound Boeing helicopter turbine he installed on this Everglades swamp boat, docked in Toronto. Plus a Williams Research Engine that only weighs 25 pounds but produces 250 pounds of thrust.

"I've had them all apart and all running," says Dunk, who's been fascinated with jet engines since childhood. The "fiddling around" puts his mind at ease. So does Fuji's Super-F series. "I really like the latitude, the nice, clean blacks. The 250 stock is just beautiful. I love the lack of grain."

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The conscience of the king. Oblivious to his majesty's treachery, Polonius (Richard Briers) confers with Claudius while flanked by a phalanx of fencers. The main hall's elaborate floor was layered with approximately 7,500 hand-made black and white tiles, each of which was subjected to a marbling process.



is evident to the audience, and it seems unnatural when the film is projected," he says. "With the 65mm camera lenses, I knew that my stop had to be at least T5.6 or T6.3. You are fighting for depth. I also anticipated that because we were filming such a large image area, strobing could become a concern. We shot some tests and decided that panning should be restricted to times when the camera was following someone. The strobing is still evident, but it's not as apparent, because the audience is watching the person the camera is panning with."

The protracted nature of *Hamlet* put a special burden on the director and cinematographer to keep the audience visually and verbally engaged. Thus, the camera was almost always moving, usually on a dolly, and occasionally on a crane, so as to display the entire set to the audience. Says Thomson, "The film has a bit of a swashbuckling feel, but it's not more aggressive than other dramas. John Huston once told me you shouldn't move the camera if you want people to listen. I told Ken that, but he said, 'What are we going to do?'

You can't have a static camera when you are shooting seven pages of dialogue. The audience going to fall asleep if they aren't interested."

The bulk of *Hamlet*'s 9½-week shoot took place on five soundstages at Shepperton Studios. The forest sequences were filmed on a 60-foot-wide, 100-foot-long stage at Shepperton; one night exterior scene was filmed outside the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim Palace in Woodstock, Oxfordshire. Some 85 percent of the film's action occurs in the ornate, grandiose main palace hall. A long corridor linked stages A and B. Various small sets were connected to the passageway, including the rooms of Gertrude (Hamlet's mother) and Claudius (his uncle and her new husband). Numerous extended tracking shots were executed in this elaborate lattice of rooms; one called for the camera to cover 360 degrees by exploring an entire set, then rolling down the corridor onto the main palace hall set, where it makes two more 360 degree moves, reverses itself, and finally tracks down the hallway in the opposite direction and onto another small set.

One of the crew members calculated that the camera traveled along six miles' worth of track during the filming of *Hamlet*. This tactic was all the more arduous because the Panaflex System 65 camera weighs 95 pounds with a 1,000-foot magazine onboard. Thomson's primary tracking tool was an Elemack dolly with rubber wheels.

In addition to the two Panaflex cameras, a high-speed unit was sometimes used to capture additional footage Branagh required to stretch out a scene. For example, after Fortinbras' armada of soldiers have overtaken Elsinore Castle, they knock down a statue of Hamlet, which then shatters. Thomson over-cranks and recorded slow-motion footage of these metal pieces as they scattered on the snow-covered terrain. In another scene, during the royal wedding of Gertrude to Claudius, her late husband's brother and executioner, a slow-motion shot catches a rain of confetti cascading from the ceiling.

Lighting for two cameras simultaneously is a challenge in any format, but Branagh wanted two cameras for extra coverage,

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Right: Murder most foul. Brooding in her bedchambers, Queen Gertrude stares at the bloody body of Polonius, recently murdered by her son Hamlet. Lower right: Good night, sweet lady. Laertes (Michael Maloney) agonizes over his dead sister Ophelia (Kate Winslet), who spent her final days in the throes of madness.



and also to ensure that long dialogue scenes would not be interrupted by a change of magazine. The specific coverage depended on the nature of the scene: if it was a ceremonial shot, or a sword fight, the cameras caught wide-angle views from different perspectives; on those rare occasions when Thomson was making static shots, the cameras were side by side shooting close-ups. "Ken is very keen on keeping the camera running when the actors get into dialogue and the rhythms of Shakespeare," says the cinematographer. "By starting the A-camera before the other one, we were able to film full scenes."

Despite the need for depth of field, Thomson elected to shoot most interiors with Eastman Kodak's EXR 5293 stock, a 200 ASA low-grain film. This raised the in-

tensity of keylight, particularly in the huge palatial hall, but Thomson found the improvement in image smoothness to be worth the conces-

sion. In the past, the cinematographer had calculated his light levels in footcandles. Now, he employs a Minolta digital meter, and adds fill light until it is sufficient to shoot at the particular stop he has selected for depth. "I could have used a faster film, or shot with the lens wide-open, and used less light, but that strategy would have missed the point of the film," he contends. "We were shooting in 65mm because the director wanted a pristine image with endless depth of field. For the same reason, I didn't use diffusion. Why would I do anything to degrade the image?"

For the night exterior sequence outside the castle, and scenes motivated by candlelight, Thomson used Eastman's 500 ASA EXR 5298 film. "I liked the little extra grain in those sequences," he says, "because it gave us a texture which was more consistent with night and candlelight."

Thomson had to utilize an Arriflex 65 camera for four days after a mishap during a long tracking shot. "One of the actors fluffed his lines, and we started again without cutting the shot," he explains. "We reached the end of the roll and ran out of film, and the edge of the last frame hit the shutter, breaking the ground glass." Arriflex delivered a replacement, which was already in London. Says the cinematographer, "We later used it as our B-camera. There weren't any problems matching shots from the two lens sets. It only took Panavision four days to ship



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An on-location exterior of Elsinore Castle. The Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire doubled as the Danish palace. Note the gilded fixtures boosting the effect of the firelight.

the repaired camera back to us from Tarzana."

Thomson says that the Panaflex cameras proved their mettle during the firelight-motivated night exterior in which the palace guards first encounter the ghost of Hamlet's father. The scene, which entailed some 50 pages of dialogue, was shot in a frigid temperature of minus 14 degrees Centigrade, but both cameras performed without a hitch.

To further complicate matters, the Muscos or Night Lights required to simulate moonlight were not available in England at the time. When faced with such

a situation in the past, Thomson has relied upon a Wendy light. That wasn't possible on *Hamlet*, because he couldn't situate the Wendy far enough away to be out of the frame. As an alternative, the filmmakers hid some 20Ks and a few other lamps in the arches on the palace roof to emulate both the moon and firelight. "It wasn't an easy location to shoot," Thomson says. "It was just these gates and a huge big courtyard with no place to hide anything, and everything was covered with snow. We had to be careful not to leak light onto the snow."

The scene continues in a forest, where Hamlet meets his father's ghost and makes the fateful promise which leads to tragedy. This sequence was shot on a set at the studio. "It was a laughably tiny stage," Thomson says. "We created moonlight and smoke. I used an 82C filter on the lens, which is the equivalent of putting a half-blue on the lamps. I also used it when we shot the night exterior scene. It has a nice silvery quality. We created the illusion of firelight with a full orange gel, and occasionally a half

CTO to bring the orange back a bit. This combination works really well with the 82C bluish filter."

Aficionados of the Bard

are no doubt as excited by the prospect of an unabridged adaptation of *Hamlet* as the cast and crew were to be involved in a 65mm period production. But given the format's broad canvas, Thomson wishes that the film's shooting schedule had allowed for additional opportunities to exploit the expanse of Shepperton Studios. The veteran cameraman points out, "We shot four hours of screen time in 9½ weeks, so some compromises were made. I wish we'd had a little more time and a few more sets as I think it would have been good to cut away from the big set from time to time, but I can't remember one instance when Ken or anyone else pushed me or we had to rush. We actually rigged the lights so we could shoot in any direction; we basically didn't spend much time lighting. It was Ken's vision and his spirit that made the film what it is. The image quality is so vivid you feel as if you can walk right into the screen." ♦



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Though he is one of the most revered cinematographers working in theatrical motion pictures, Haskell Wexler, ASC has also been the director and/or cameraman on over 80 documentaries. In fact, in addition to earning Academy Awards for two of his features (*Who's Afraid of Woolf?* in 1966, and *Bound for Glory* in 1976) and nominations for five others, he has received two Best Documentary Oscars, for *The Living City* (1953) and *Interviews with My Lai Veterans* (1970).

The titles of some of his other non-fiction films help indicate to what extent Wexler has spent the better part of over 50 years behind the camera as a committed humanitarian in pursuit of social justice and reform: *Brazil: Report on Torture* (1971), *An Interview with President Allende* (1971), *Underground* (1972), *An Introduction to the Enemy* (1974) *The CIA Case Officer* (1978), *No Nukes* (1980), *War Without Winners* (1982), *Enhanced Radiation* (1982), *Target Nicaragua: Inside a Secret War* (1983).

At one time, Wexler's films were so controversial at the federal level that documents acquired through the Freedom of Information Act comprise a veritable book on government surveillance of his documentary work. In 1972, some of his footage was subpoenaed by the Department of Justice (a move which was resisted).

The FBI even went so far as to critique his professional aptitude in a document dated May 4, 1964: "Wexler is considered to be a good cameraman if allowed to take his time and fuss around. He is not too good as a cameraman for commercial, feature motion pictures or television work for this reason." (Less than two years later he would earn his first Academy Award. So much for what the FBI knows about cinematography.)

But times have changed. Whereas Wexler and his crew once fought with Chicago police to get their images of the riotous 1968 Democratic Convention for his docu-style feature *Medium Cool*, he was invited back last year as a member of the press. His assignment: to report on the more tranquil atmosphere at the recent

A Document in Motion

Haskell Wexler, ASC concludes his trilogy about the politics of public transport with *The Bus III*.

by Ric Gentry

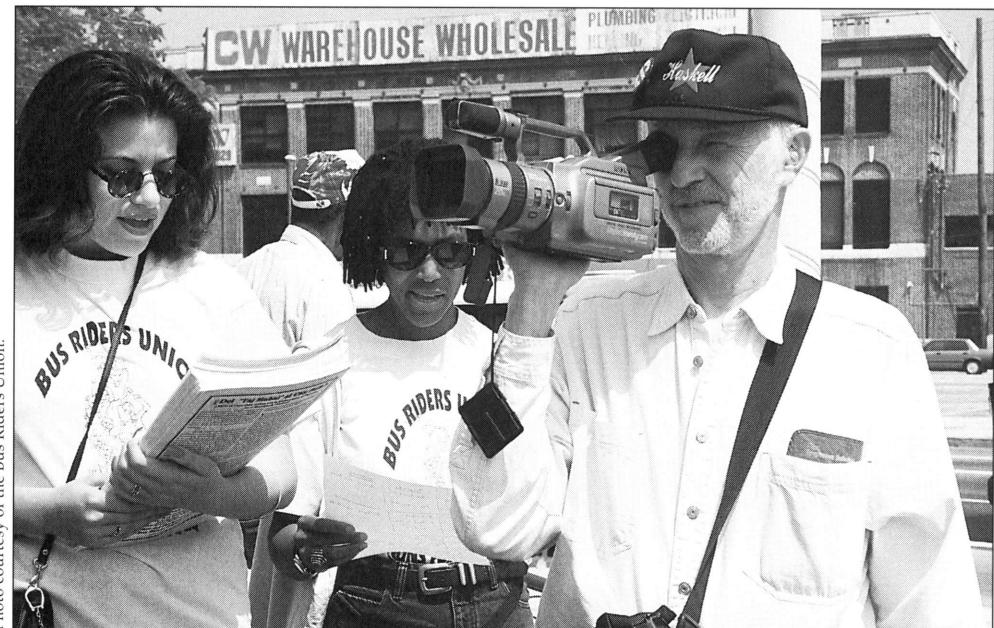


Photo courtesy of the Bus Riders Union.

Democratic National Convention for ABC's *Nightline* with Ted Koppel.

If that weren't enough of an overture from the television mainstream, Wexler, observed shooting on the convention floor, was subsequently solicited by the Democratic Party to light Bill Clinton at the podium before the Arkansas state capitol in Little Rock for 2,000 international camera crews when the newly re-elected president of the United States gave his victory speech on the night of November 6, 1996.

Despite all this, Wexler continues to tirelessly pursue his activist filmmaking efforts. While completing two features (*Mulholland Falls* and *The Rich Man's Wife*) and numerous commercials in 1996, he also worked on two documentaries: *The Sixth Sun: Mayan Uprising in Chiapas* and *The*

Bus III, the final segment of a trilogy about public transport which he began in 1963. "I've always been interested in the subject of buses," Wexler says. "You get people in a confined area on a journey who may have something in common, and the longer they're together, the more they discover about each other and the more likely it is that something dramatic will develop."

The first film in Wexler's trilogy (and his own documentary favorite), is simply entitled *The Bus*. This initial installment observes as a diverse congregation travels from San Francisco to participate in the 1963 Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech before 250,000 people. The second, *The Bus II* depicts another group, riding from Los Angeles to New York's United Nation's Plaza to support

Wexler wields his Sony DCR-VX1000 while shooting a Bus Riders Union march in Los Angeles for Bus III. He found the digital camcorder to produce Beta-quality images, while its small size helped diminish the intrusion factor inherent in shooting documentaries.

the 1982 U.N. Special Session on Disarmament. Nearly a million people gathered for the event. The film also documents their stops along the way to organize in various towns and cities, in addition to a visit to the site of the first nuclear weapons test in Alamogordo, TX.

The Bus III is a more local affair, a depiction of the recent movement mounted by the Labor/Community Strategy Center (L/CSC) and its Bus Riders Union to compel the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) to redirect their efforts to construct a subway system (which is already notoriously faulty and extremely expensive) in order to improve conditions for the millions of city bus riders. "I got involved when I was introduced to the L/CSC by the Liberty Hall foundation," explains Wexler of *Bus III*. "It struck me as a very interesting and meaningful movement, and since I've always been interested in buses, I approached the Bus Riders Union and suggested shooting a documentary while things were still developing."

Wexler began by observing union members on city buses and at stops, where they recruited new members and gathered signatures for a petition requesting a democratically elected MTA board, more vehicles, better transit security, additional less-polluting natural-gas buses, less-expensive fares, and the availability of weekly and monthly passes. By the time he shot an amendment to the federally overseen settlement of October 28, 1996 (already considered a triumph for the Riders, since virtually all of their demands had been met) Wexler had ventured out 24 times and had nine of hours of footage—which would be edited into a one-hour presentation.

"I think the film provides a very good look at what a grass-roots organization can accomplish," Wexler says. "There aren't really any individual heroes. The heroes are the people of Los Angeles who brought their cause to the fore and improved transportation conditions in a way that other cities might emulate. It was all very interesting and very exciting, to

watch it all progress and see what they achieved."

Wexler's vision of the structure for *Bus III* included the following elements: (1) "The two different worlds of those who ride cars and those who ride buses, with people waiting on benches at street corners while Ferraris and cars like mine pass by;" (2) three young people — a white male, an Asian and a black female — recruiting on corners and in the vehicles; (3) demonstrations by the Bus Riders Union in places such as Union Station, where their activities are interrupted by railroad security; (4) the meeting with the city Board of Education, which filed an amicus brief into the major lawsuit that the Bus Riders Union had against the MTA for racial discrimination; (5) the meeting with the MTA to reach a settlement; (6) the proclamation by LA mayor Richard Riordan, who complemented the Union as "a grass-roots movement in the best traditions of democracy;" and (7) the Union victory celebration, featuring a number of moving speeches by various members.

"Dramatically, I was blessed with a big victory for the Union," Wexler comments. "In the previous bus films there was an obvious conclusion: their arrival in New York or Washington. Naturally, I needed some kind of 'end point,' but when I started I wasn't sure what that would be."

"There is a wonderful speech by a woman named Della at the Bus Riders celebration. She mentions how proud she was of contributing to the improvement of transportation for ordinary people, that after two years of work she was able to lift her voice through the Union and establish a model for people everywhere, and that she would be proud if the accomplishment were put on her gravestone. But she also is quick to note that despite the victory, the struggle would continue, as in all political endeavors."

"The story has a nice dramatic arc," Wexler continues, "but so much of it is what you discover as you go along. That's one of the great pleasures of documentary filmmaking; it's a learning process

and it's an adventure, no matter what subject you choose. Also, I just love to shoot film. I get great joy from holding a camera and watching things unfold before my eyes, things that could never be scripted."

In achieving such intimate observations, Wexler points out the value of the camera- and sound-person working as a team, especially in the first two *Bus* films. "It's vital to a good documentary," he says. "A good sound person would know from the angle of the [manual] zoom sticks [on the lens] how tight or loose the shot was, and therefore how close to get with the microphone. Likewise, if sound conditions were bad I tried to get the lens in tighter so the soundperson could get the microphone in closer without being in the shot. The personality of the soundperson was important in making subjects comfortable and to encourage them, since the cameraperson was obviously unable to be more in contact from behind the camera. They can also be very helpful in discerning important activity that doesn't have your attention at the moment." Nel Cox (now a documentary director) recorded sound on *Bus I*, and Tom Tyson on *Bus II*. On *Bus III*, Wexler recorded sound himself (more on that later).

A particularly interesting aspect of *The Bus* trilogy is the evolution in photographic technology and its effect on the subjects of the respective films. *Bus I* was shot in 16mm with 400 ASA Tri-X black-and-white film. Much of its power is derived from the countless passenger debates over issues, as well as the moving personal testimonies related to race relations. "People back then were a whole lot less media-aware," Wexler recalls. "They also believed in what they were doing and were emotionally involved in their conversations. They were inclined to treat the camera incidentally."

Bus II was shot with a 16mm Aaton camera with Kodak color negative stock. The look of the film is very different from *Bus I*, just as the entire cultural atmosphere was different 19 years later. The bus shown in the film is

splashed in rainbow hues, the clothing is far more casual, and the musical idioms are derived from rock-and-roll rather than folk tunes. There is also much more camera awareness, even allegations between some riders that others are using the camera as a personal forum, though there is still the sense of eavesdropping on political debate and moving personal testimony.

Ever-interested in the evolution of AV technology, Wexler shot *Bus III* with the Sony DCR-VX1000 Digital Video Handycam, a single-system, three-chip unit with a 20:1 zoom and a built-in microphone. While fundamentally designed for consumers, Wexler believes that the camera produces Beta-quality images. "The visual capabilities of that camera are incredible," he comments. "I used it on the work I did for *Nightline*. ABC was so impressed that they wanted to purchase a number of them for the network, but the camera was so new that they had trouble getting them and had to

rent one from me."

Wexler's uncanny exposures for *Bus III* demonstrate the DCR-VX1000's ability to capture a broad latitude of light. While primarily shot from within vehicles, action and scenery beyond the windows is as discernible as the subjects a mere few feet away — ordinarily a notorious exposure dilemma for any cameraperson. Therefore, Wexler is able to simultaneously portray the environment the buses travel in and the actions of passengers and passersby — most memorably, a pair of street musicians with guitars slung over their shoulders waiting to cross a busy street.

The cameraman also relied heavily on the DCR-VX1000's autoexposure and autofocus functions. "I tended to use both," Wexler says, "because the response is so fast and the controls are so good. Those features helped, because there was a lot of [spontaneous] action on the buses. Plus, if the backlight exceeded a certain level behind the subject, I could instantly

adjust for it."

The DCR-VX1000 is extremely light and compact, which enabled Wexler to mount it easily to the steps of buses, shoot from within a crowded aisle or record from the edge of a seat. "It allows you to be completely independent in your movements in a way that a 16mm camera setup doesn't," he says. Moreover, the camera's mike is built-in, a feature that allowed Wexler to work entirely by himself as a "one-man band." Therein, however, lies a significant limitation. "As I was saying before, sound is vital for a documentary," Wexler says, "especially on a project like this, where there were a lot of speakers. Ideally, you still need a soundperson and there were times while shooting *Bus III* when I wished I'd had one, because the soundperson can extend the mike closer to the subject while you shoot from a distance with a longer part of the lens. A separate mike can also pick up ambient sounds or run continuous sound even if the camera is off, such as at

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big meetings, where ideally you can go off and on with the camera but still get the ongoing sound from the platform so you can intercut later. The same would be true if you were shooting a rock concert or something like that."

But, Wexler continues, "The stereo microphone on the DCR-VX1000 is very good, but it's always a challenge to get decent sound on a bus, simply because of the nature of the vehicle itself. I did find that there was less rumble on a crowded bus, and even though I tried to shoot a lot of things near the front, where there's less engine noise, the sound could be pretty muffled if the

buses were nearly empty, which fortunately they seldom were. The opposite was usually the case, which is one reason the Union wanted more buses — so they wouldn't be so crowded.

"There's also a mike input so that you can attach a lavalier or any other microphone if you want to deal with a wire and soundperson. But in general, the weakness of having any kind of microphone on the camera can be severe. If you're following one character, one of the best ways to overcome that is to use a radio mike and have a receiver mounted on the camera. Beyond that, if you can use a separate sound recordist, do that."

About halfway through the production, Wexler made an equipment change to fend off the sublevel engine roar, obtaining a Sony Electraset Condenser microphone (ECM Z157). "It's a small [unidirectional] shotgun mike," he says, "which I attached in the input. That helped quite a bit."

Wexler naturally found that the compact size of the camera was extremely unobtrusive and unintimidating to his subjects. "It's not like I was getting on the bus with a huge camera and another person with a big microphone," he remarks. "The camera I used was more like something your Uncle Joe would use to take birthday pic-

tures. People often forget about it pretty quickly."

This was a valuable asset, given what Wexler has discovered about the increasing self-consciousness of subjects before the camera, especially those with modest or low incomes who feel may feel that their relationship with society is precarious. "Many

"It's not like I was getting on the bus with a huge camera and another person with a big microphone," he remarks. "The camera I used was more like something your Uncle Joe would use to take birthday pictures."

— Haskell Wexler, ASC

of them don't like to have their picture taken, because they don't know who will see the pictures," he says. "People are concerned about the security of their images. In many cases, it's just about all they have."

"Just today I was riding on the subway getting footage to show how this train system, which they have spent billions of dollars to construct, is usually empty — as opposed to the busses, which are always so crowded. There was one couple on the train — the only people on it — but as soon as they saw me reach for the camera, they repositioned themselves so that I couldn't see their faces. These days, there's a great deal of skepticism about the dispersal of imagery and what its destination is. Depending on what you're doing, that attitude is something any documentary filmmaker has to confront."

As Wexler is optimistic about portable, inexpensive video equipment providing much greater opportunities for documentaries to be made, he also sees improvements in other technology — such as CD-ROM and the Internet — gradually broadening the channels for distribution. "The advent of cheaper video equipment, witness the Rodney King incident, allows people to make sound pictures of quality that

weren't possible before.

"But the bottom line is what you do with it. It's not much if just your friends and relatives look at what you have done. There has to be some kind of network where you can share your work with others, generate interest in your subject and obtain the attention it may deserve. Maybe you can start a little prairie fire that way, especially with an important cause that the major media aren't acknowledging."

Reflecting on the significance his camera may have had on the outcome of events documented on *Bus III*, Wexler says, "I think it had a positive influence on what they were doing. The [Union members] would call me and say, 'We're going to be doing this or that. Do you want to come out?' I think they realized the importance of letting the public know what was going on and possibly having some kind of record of how such a movement evolved. The filming may have added a little momentum to their progress, and I'm very pleased if I helped provide it."

Inevitably, Wexler's non-fiction shooting experiences influence his work in features. "With documentaries you see people do things that you would rarely see in a feature film," he says. "Years ago I was working in the emergency ward of a hospital and there was a kid who was knocked off his bicycle and hit by a car. His mother was there, and she appeared to be a sweet, loving, responsible person. In a feature film she would have been looking down at her son and trying to console him. But here, she was pacing around the table, scolding the boy, saying, 'How many times have I told you not to ride your bike in the street?!!' She was in tears but she was yelling at him."

"When you see that in reality it gives you the courage to break with the clichés of stereotypical filmmaking in movies and TV. The world is much richer and diverse and erratic than we usually imagine it to be."

Wexler also finds that documentaries influence his compositions on theatrical movies. "My first feature films took a docu-



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mentary approach because that's what I knew," Wexler says. "Often, the less in control you seem to be exerting, the more real things seem. I remember suggesting the use of a handheld camera for a scene in *The Best Man* [a 1964 film based on Gore Vidal's play about political conventioneering during a presidential race]. It had already been arranged to do it on a set, but I said, 'Why don't we do it in a real car?' We did it that way, but a lot of people were still asking, 'Why?' Shooting on location in those days was still pretty new, but that was the only way I felt comfortable making that scene. I didn't know what process or rear-screen was. What I was doing seemed rather avant-garde, but I didn't know any better. The point is that it enabled me to add something to the imagery from a technical standpoint by simplifying the technique and not being afraid to forfeit the usual control.

"In documentaries, the visual power often comes from *not* seeing something. You can't always put the camera right in front

of someone. Sometimes it's a three-quarter view, and sometimes a view completely from behind, but you often find that it not only works, but it's better than if you were to put the camera in front — and you remember that. To make a generalization, shooting documentaries can be a sketch pad for learning what you can do in a feature.

"It's the same with lighting. You can't control it in a real situation, but natural lighting is not only dramatic but quite beautiful. For anyone interested in learning about that, I would suggest going into a room or a series of rooms with a still camera. I think you'll find that there's a lot more there than you might have suspected, and that the quality of the light, particularly where there are windows, is so wonderful that you can only mess it up by adding something to it. When you make your framing work with the light that you have on a documentary, you later realize that what first appear to be limitations are actually advantages."

At the same time, features

influence Wexler's documentaries as well. "You understand what works dramatically," he says. "When you see something while shooting a documentary that has continuity and emotion, you try to have that build and pay off.

"The same is true with editing, and how you structure things, though I would add that you often go a little further with a scene in editing a documentary, where little codas allow things to play through so that a little more is revealed — an aspect of behavior, or ideas maybe. On a feature, you're again more controlled, more symmetrical."

Wexler's documentaries also seek to alter how things are perceived, both in form and content. During an appearance on *Nightline*, Ted Koppel asked the revered cinematographer and documentarian, "Why do you inject your political ideas into all of your films?" Candidly, Wexler replied, "Ted, I don't 'inject' into my work. I simply do in my work what I believe in." ♦

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Images of brutality permeate the American cinema, but they are seldom presented with such candor as those seen in the first few seconds of *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders At Robin Hood Hills*, the latest documentary by Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky, makers of the award-winning 1992 verité film *Brother's Keeper*.

Shot in 1993 by a West Memphis, Arkansas crime scene investigator, the shaky video footage that opens *Paradise Lost* coldly depicts the aftermath of a ghastly murder. Three eight-year-old boys lay dead aside a shallow stream, their pallid skin in stark contrast to the dark muddy bank. They had been bound, tortured and, in one case, sexually mutilated. It is suspected that the killings were part of a Satanic ritual.

The media-besieged local police soon believe that they've solved the crime solved after the lengthy interrogation of 17-year-old Jessie Lloyd Misskelly Jr., who makes a strange confession implicating himself and friends Charles Jason Baldwin (16) and Damien Wayne Echols (18) in the murders. Seemingly aimless and disenfranchised, the working-class youths also happen to have a penchant for heavy-metal music and black clothes, as well as an interest in the occult. These idiosyncrasies were considered hard evidence by West Memphis officials who, despite the lack of physical proof, arrested the trio of teens.

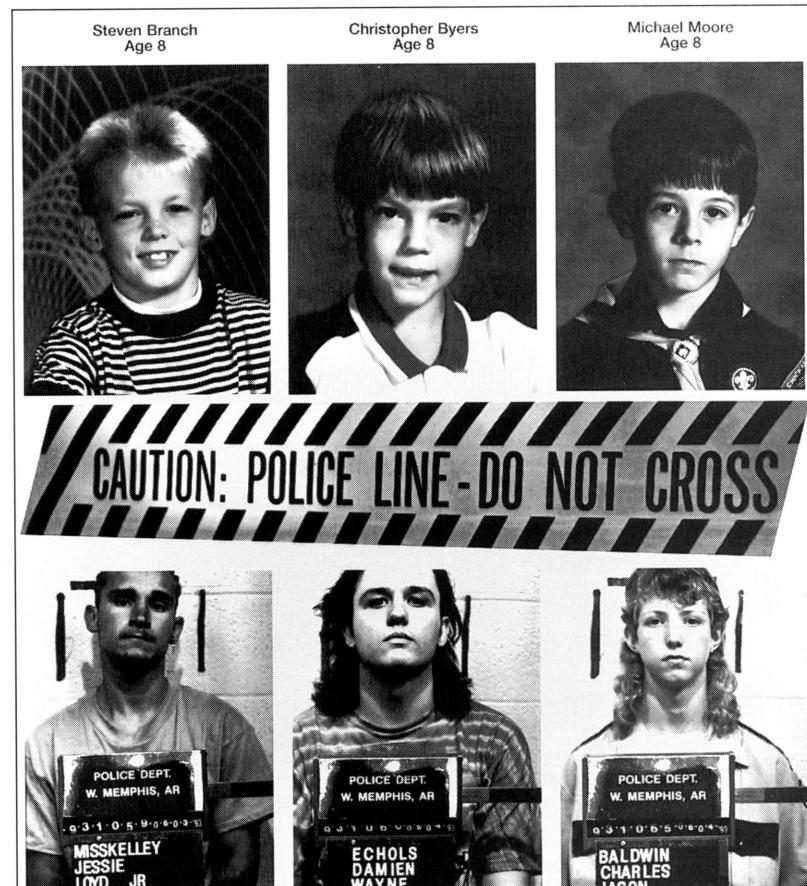
At this point in the investigation, news of the tragedy and impending trial reached Berlinger and Sinofsky in New York by way of Sheila Nevins, their executive producer at HBO. The filmmakers were immediately interested in pursuing the subject, and soon made their first trip to the Southern site armed with the filmmaking aesthetics they used on *Brother's Keeper* — a straightforward style devoid of the hyperactive visual recreations so popular in other true-crime productions.

"What we do is very different from what the media does," explains Berlinger. "We absolutely hate voice-over, which goes back to the verité tradition of not telling people what to think. By not using

Finding Truth Within a Gruesome Reality

The twin horrors of murder and injustice are examined in the shockingly intimate *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills*.

by David E. Williams

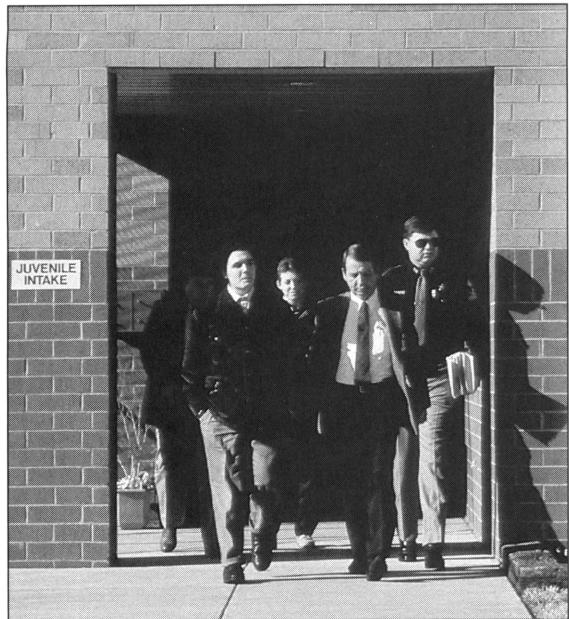


Faces of death:
The victims and
the accused in
the West
Memphis case.

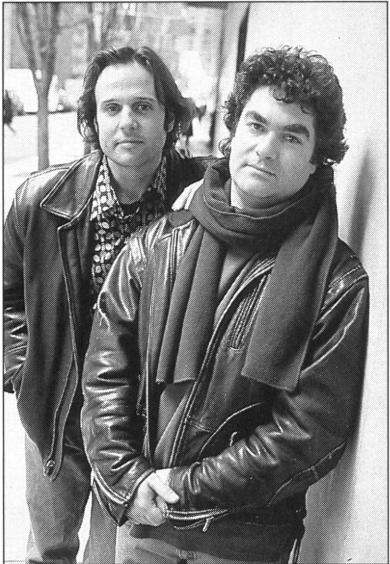
voice-over, we hope to engage the audience more directly with the visual material and force them to come up with their own conclusions. There's a point of view in the footage that can be found if someone cares to embrace that. But we trust our audience to take the journey with us, as opposed to us dragging them kicking and screaming to the point of view of two liberal guys from New York."

In describing their prep for the nine-month shoot, Sinofsky

confesses, "Not to sound lame, but we usually do as little research as possible before getting into a situation. We don't want to waste time and miss out of things that are happening in the present tense. We also want to experience the story as it's happening, and not have pre-conceived notions. Ironically, we thought we were going down to Arkansas to make a film about three guilty teenagers, but by our third trip we had real questions about their guilt."



Above: The accused are led out of the courthouse. **Right:** Both Sinofsky and Berlinger (left) are ardent supporters of shooting film as opposed to video. Offers Sinofsky, "Film breathes. There are many different stocks — daylight, tungsten, slow-speed, high-speed — but video always looks the same to me. You throw one kind of tape in your camera whether you're inside, outside, or in a closet. And unlike tape, film endures."



Adds Berlinger, "A few of our most powerful scenes took place in the first two weeks. Some traditional documentary people would have spent a month doing research and would have missed them. An exception to this approach took place on *Brother's Keeper*, where we first spent five weekends with the subjects — without camera equipment — so we could break down the barriers and find some common ground. But that's not so much research as it is relationship-building."

"There's a big difference between that and what a local, or even CNN, news crew does — popping in and boiling a story

down to a lowest-common-denominator sound bite. Bruce and I spend a hell of a lot of time with people so that we can uncover the complexities of a situation."

As seen in *Paradise Lost*, the news media became dangerously insensitive in this case, at one point stooping to ask a victim's mother, "What does it feel like to spend your first Mother's Day without your son?" Sinofsky recalls, "Of course she didn't answer that, but those kinds of infuriating questions quickly created a divide between the media and all parties concerned."

Says Berlinger, "To tell a story in the present tense as we did in this film means that you have to have the cooperation of the subjects. If you lose that, you have to rely on things like narration. That's what other people do when they don't get their material, but we got the goods on both *Brother's Keeper* and *Paradise Lost*, allowing the people and the action to explain what's going on."

As most practitioners of the documentary arts know, tenacity is as valuable as film stock, a functioning camera and sufficient light. Berlinger and Sinofsky learned this lesson while working for renowned documentarians Albert and David Maysles. The duo met in 1986, and first collaborated three years later on the comic short *Outrageous Taxi Stories*, which earned numerous awards, including a nomination for Distinguished Documentary Achievement from the International Documentary Association. The two then founded Creative Thinking International, through which they produced *Brother's Keeper* — the story of three reclusive, elderly farmers suspected of murder — which garnered Best Documentary honors from the Director's Guild of America, the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Review, among other accolades. Additional projects include "The Begging Game," an ABC News/*Frontline* investigation into panhandling, and TV spots made under the banner of their Gray Matter Productions television commercial arm.

Another key member of the *Paradise Lost* production team

was cameraman Robert Richman, who, along with second-unit cameramen/AC John Thoma and Douglas Cooper, captured intimate images of both sides of the events in West Memphis. "We've worked with Bob for a long time," Sinofsky says. "We grew up together at Maysles and we're good friends. He's our third eye. But we downplay production, which is part of what gets us into people's homes. And Bob, like Doug Karas, who shot *Brother's Keeper*, understands that approach. More importantly, he *listens* to the conversation. In an interview situation, he's moving in on emotional moments because he is sensing and feeling what is going on in that person's mind and heart. He also gives us cutting options, so Joe and I have choices later on during editing."

"The basic problem every documentary cinematographer has is shooting a scene in a way that can be edited — capturing the whole scene — while still showing people in a very human way," says Richman, who has also shot "The Begging Game" and portions of *Woodstock '94*, as well as such other documentaries as *Dealers Among Dealers*, *A Tickle in the Heart*, *Back from Madness* and *Abortion: Desperate Choices*. "You don't have control of the lighting or what's going to happen, even if you run out of film, so *listening* is very important. It shows respect for your subject and also tunes you in to what's going to happen. The camera is not the most important thing in the room, the people are. Hopefully that attitude comes through; I basically try to be myself and act as comfortable with the subjects as I would be without the camera. If you don't develop that trust, you're intruding, and everything you want to film will stop. On this project, I credit Bruce and Joe with building those relationships so that having the camera there never became an issue."

Berlinger notes, however, "It's not like just anybody can work with us. We've experimented with other camerapeople, but we get into trouble sometimes because they don't listen to and understand content. Also, there's the need to not only be unobtrusive, but a positive element in people's lives."

Says Richman of his relationship with Berlinger and Sinofsky, "The only thing I really had to get used to was working with two directors. Usually the director and the cameraman have a close collaboration, but here Joe and Bruce collaborate with each other. I had to get into that loop a bit more, but it works."

While shooting *Paradise Lost*, the cinematographer found the subject matter emotionally taxing for an unexpected reason. "We had to see people as human beings as opposed to stereotypes," Richman explains, who says that the media reports on the case were initially detrimental to this process. "Whether they live in a trailer park or are accused of some horrible crime, you have to open yourself up to them in order to make the film in an honest way so that your subjects are human beings on the screen. I don't see these films as journalism so much as they are intimate relationships with these people. We present people as if the viewer is meeting them."

Paradise Lost was primarily shot on film, despite the fact that the HBO production was to have its premiere run on television. Berlinger maintains, "There's nothing like the look of film, and you'd want to use it for every aesthetic reason. However, we did shoot the trial sequences on video, partially for budgetary reasons. On *Brother's Keeper*, we learned that you can't continuously roll in court, since a lot of boring and unusable things happen during a trial. Everyone can turn on Court TV or the news and see courtroom footage; it's not so remarkable. But they rarely put it in the kind of context that we do in our film. We also felt it was important to distinguish between the trial sequences and that context, so we used video for the court material and film for the larger view."

According to Berlinger, the duo did approach *Paradise Lost* with one specific visual aesthetic: "We didn't film anybody to look particularly sinister or anything like that, but we did want the film to have an overall extreme coldness to match the general mood and color temperature in West Mem-

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phis. We used filters and film stocks that would give us that effect, whereas on *Brother's Keeper*, which had a story with some inherent warmth, we used the appropriate approach to retain that warmth. But that's really the only artificial, conscious choice we made."

Says Richman, who relied on a standard 16mm Aaton camera and a Canon 8-64mm lens for the bulk of the shoot, "Joe and Bruce pretty much trusted me. They told me what they like, but I had to shoot it by reacting to the situations. Most importantly, they directed me to things that were happening outside of my eyeline. They're another set of eyes for me."

Although the cinematographer concedes that filming *Paradise Lost* in Super 16 would have been preferable in light of its eventual blow-up to 35mm (to be distributed theatrically by Berlinger and Sinofsky's own company), Richman reveals that shooting for the 1.33:1 TV frame ensured that little information would be lost during the conversion to 1.85:1.

While artificial lighting was a rarity outside of formal interview situations, Richman brought along a small Arri kit or Lowell Tota lights and a Chimera softbox. "You don't want to go crazy in a situation like this," the cameraman says, "primarily because you don't want to have people thinking about 'making the film.'

"There's one scene in the film where the prosecuting attorneys tell the victim's families that they really don't have a lot of evidence and might have to make some kind of a deal. Joe had happened to hear that this meeting was going to occur and got us permission to shoot [the scene] at one of the prosecutor's homes. They weren't going to wait for us, but we were going to be really underexposed. I had time to throw up one Tota light and bounce it into the ceiling — the worst kind of lighting. But I tried to maximize what was going on with the light, and the scene is vital to the film.

"It's frustrating to me as a photographer to have to do that," Richman admits. "There were a lot of ugly locations, but you have to learn to subordinate your desire for

a good-looking frame in order to get the content. So you do what you can with composition, working like a jazz musician and moving with the mood."

The documentary began production three years ago, just as Kodak was introducing 7298, so Richman had to rely primarily on 7296. "It's grainy, but I had to go with the faster stock," he recalls. "Still, I used 93, 48 and 45 depending on the conditions, because I will go for a better stock whenever I can. Some people try to maintain with one, but I prefer to use any of them to their fullest extent without compromising them. You don't want to miss a scene because you wanted a slower stock and had to waste time setting up a light."

In *Paradise Lost*, the access Berlinger and Sinofsky got into people's lives is astonishing; in one instance, they film and record a phone conversation between a jailed Jessie Misskelley Jr. and his girlfriend. As the camera rolls, the discussion turns to his sexual thoughts about her. Explains Berlinger, "They were both aware we were filming, but sometimes the desire to be on film or the level of trust allows the filmmakers to keep going. Some people might have stopped the cameras, but there wasn't any point where we felt we needed to do that. We had the option in the editing room to cut out things that were too sensitive, so why not shoot it?"

In another situation, the parents of one young victim visit their son's grave, and take Polaroids of each other while the sun sets. "Obviously there were some scenes like that which required forethought and were less spontaneous," says Berlinger. "But spending time with our subjects and getting them used to us — helping them forget that filming was going on — created an environment where people liked us, trusted us and didn't mind if we were around. In this case, we were visiting the family and they mentioned that they were going to the grave — we simply asked if we could tag along. We didn't know what we were going to film until hours before we were doing it."

"Some people say we are

guilty of 'taking advantage' of people," Sinofsky remarks candidly. "But they make the conscious choice to be on camera because they have something to say about their grief or anger or hostility. We don't ambush people, but some critics can't believe we can get these kinds of scenes and 'performances' from people. Some even accuse us of scripting things or telling subjects what to do. They don't understand that we work very hard at building trust in order to get this kind of access. Hey, we're amazed too, but Joe and I can't create these things."

However, becoming close with a subject "can get in the way of what we ultimately have to do," insists Berlinger. "When we get into that editing room, we're faced with a situation where we have to forget that friendship for the sake of the film, and we sometimes have to include a scene that is critical or compromising."

"But we cast a wide net during the shoot," Sinofsky confirms, "by shooting 150 hours of footage to get the 150 minutes we present in the final cut. So we investigated things on many angles, ultimately sorting out [footage] on the flatbed in the editing room — finding and heightening our points through drama and juxtaposition."

In an interesting aside, Berlinger says that "a minority of purist documentarians are confused or angry about this film because we don't tell the audience what to think. That's not our mission. This isn't an advocacy film like *The Thin Blue Line*, and Bruce and I are not all-knowing and all-seeing. Sometimes we capture stuff that we aren't even aware of capturing. The greatest reaction our films can have is when viewers come back to us with their comments and tell us about things we never intended. And the interpretations they have would not be happening if we reduced everything to a narration point."

The filmmakers report that in the case of *Paradise Lost*, about 80 percent of the audience typically has doubts that the three convicted killers are in fact guilty. Meanwhile, the lawyers of the trio have all filed appeals. ♦

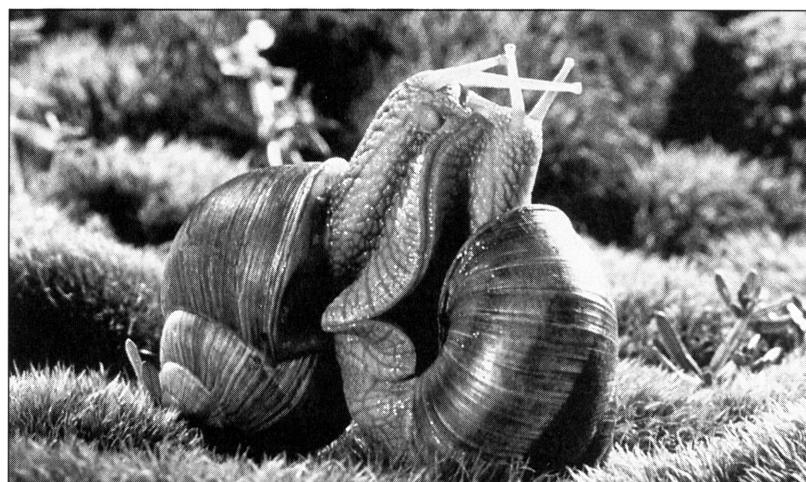
When director Claude Nuridsany is asked through an interpreter whether he considers himself primarily a filmmaker or a biologist, his answer is immediate. "Un hybride," responds the Frenchman, who collaborated with his wife and longtime research partner, Marie Perennou, on *Microcosmos*, a feature-length documentary that places a magnifying glass over the insect kingdom.

Rest assured that this scientific-cinematic couple is no highbrow hyphenate act intent on pawning off dryer-than-desert praying mantis outtakes to an unsuspecting public. Though the duo's \$5 million, 75-minute film is most certainly an educational exercise, its purpose is much more secular. "We weren't searching for things to shoot for the very first time," says Nuridsany, who co-directed and operated cameras along with Perennou. "The objective was to show things in a new light." Shot as a series of vignettes spotlighting the daily routines of various forms of bugs near the couple's home/studio in the Aveyron region of southern France, the film exists on a plane that its makers de-

Angles on Insects

French filmmakers Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou dissect the wondrous world of insects in *Microcosmos*.

by Michael X. Ferraro



Left: A pair of amorous gastropods in mid-coitus, as captured by the husband-and-wife filmmaking team of Claude Nuridsany and Marie Perennou (bottom left).



swoops down into the underbelly of an "any-meadow," where spiders, beetles, bees, caterpillars and snails struggle through life in a world that the narration describes as being as "immense as a planet." It is on this ethereal canvas that the insect ensemble is deployed in an

overlapping, Altman-esque fashion by its directors, who also comprised most of the crew.

Since graduating from the esteemed Pierre et Marie Curie University in Paris in the early Seventies, the husband-and-wife filmmakers have gravitated toward more untraditional methods in displaying their views of the microscopic world. Successfully unveiling this realm required not only years of painstaking research and "observation diaries," but access to

media outlets the general public wouldn't shy away from; consequently, the pair published a series of six books of their photography (including *To See the Invisible*), and in 1984 made their first 16mm documentary film (*The Looking Glass Inhabitants*) for Channel One. Other short documentaries for television followed, and then, some four years ago, the couple hooked up with Oscar-winning actor-producer Jacques Perrin (Z) to embark upon the odyssey that resulted in *Microcosmos*.

More than 15 years of scientific research went into the film, and the technical tasks involved in its creation were equally daunting. Two years of design and modification work on the duo's special camera and lighting equipment were required to give Nuridsany and Perennou the freedom to record their subjects with as little interference as possible. The actual filming (at a hefty 40:1 ratio of filmed footage to footage that survived the final edit) occurred over a three-year

Photos by C. Nuridsany and M. Perennou, courtesy of Miramax.

scribe as "somewhere between poetry and reality."

Indeed, Nuridsany cites science fiction, not documentary, as the genre most inspirational to *Microcosmos*. The proof is in the final product. The images and sounds are intentionally otherworldly, delivered with a stylized candor that affords viewers a voyeur's view of what he calls "the planet below the planet." Virtually devoid of narration, the film begins in a cottony cloud field, and

A scarab beetle wrestles with a large ball of sheep dung caught on a thorn. The predicament added a genuine moment of slapstick to *Microcosmos*' diminutive dramatics.



period. Hughes Ryffel and Thierry Machado served as camera operators intermittently for a few months throughout the schedule, but all of the close-range photography was done by Nuridsany and Perennou.

The primary location of *Microcosmos* was an open-air studio, approximately 100 square meters in area, that was constructed right next to the filmmakers' house. A home away from home for much of the eclectic "cast" of the film (about 28 different species), the life-sustaining habitat was rigged with a custom-made motion-control system that afforded Nuridsany and Perennou continuous "fly on the wall" coverage. "The goal was to be flexible enough to be able to film the insects as they were," says Nuridsany, who notes that existing equipment was not up to the infinitesimal task.

In order to modify the equipment, Nuridsany had to collaborate with an engineer, as it "was very difficult to avoid the little vibrations that you normally have. This [particular] motion-control system had to be entirely created [for the macrocinematography]. It moved the camera (in this case, a modified Arriflex 35 III, with a special Nikon mount) very smoothly along five axes: right-left, forward-backwards; top-bottom; pan and tilt; plus focusing." The computer-controlled system was operated from a special desk — complete with a digitizing table, fluid head, and foot pedals — that adjoined the studio. Numerous scenes were shot with the motion control rig,

which Nuridsany says was indispensable to the production.

A completely new camera movement system had to be devised for certain scenes, including one that shadowed a procession of caterpillars. The camera hung close to the ground from a special rail supported by two tripods. The unit tracked the caterpillars with the help of a remote-controlled electric motor that allowed the filmmakers to follow their subjects at various speeds.

The movie employed all manner of macros lenses, including specially transformed Zeiss and Leitz microscope lenses. A very narrow, high-definition probe lens was created from scratch. Due to the down-and-dirty-nature of the shoot, specially designed snap-on lens hoods became standard tools.

In delving into this minute world, Nuridsany and Perennou sought to present the insects' environment from the closest possible vantage point without physically disrupting their natural behavior. In truth, the filmmakers' technique could be described as "staged vérité." Since the insects' universe was immediately altered, and perhaps compromised, by the presence of cameras and crew, the bugs were often guided, or directed, into performing acts known to occur naturally in their habitat. Thus was the case with two specific players — the scarab beetle and the rare Argyronet spider.

The beetle was sent to the set by a scientist friend, says Nuridsany, and was kept in a large terrarium until his "call time." Also known as a "dung beetle," the

scarab instinctively shaped its feeding of sheep droppings into a large ball to be rolled back towards its home. "We shot for about three weeks with this beetle," says Nuridsany, "And every day he transformed this sheep dirt into a new pellet, which was a little different each day. We had to modify the diameter of every pellet so that it looked like the first one [for continuity's sake]."

The beetle was even coaxed into a moment of genuinely funny slapstick, although its quick learning curve forced the directors to use the first take. Having previously observed many of the beetle's counterparts encountering difficulties in transporting the (comparatively) giant spherical pellets, Nuridsany strove to inject some humor into the scene. "At one point there was a thorn sticking out of the ground; we couldn't touch the beetle, because it's dangerous to the animal, so we [intentionally] made shadows to make the beetle go toward the thorn. When he tried to get his ball over the thorn, it got stuck. He was looking for solutions, and it took him about three minutes to find the right way. So every other day, in order to have a new take, we again put the pellet on the needle, but after the first time it only took him about three seconds to figure out how to get it off."

Sometimes the magic of cinema reveals hidden truths, as one of Nuridsany's numerous "casting directors" found out with his prized performer the Argyronet, or "water" spider. "The person who brought it to us is a university professor in Amsterdam," the director says. "He's been studying them for decades, yet he never ever saw them [actually] make the air bubbles [for their unusual eating process]."

Microcosmos rectified that with some spellbinding footage of the Argyronet that Nuridsany believes has never before been recorded with a 35mm camera. "[The spider is] a very rare species, but its activity is so magical that you can't overlook it," he says. "It's a spider living under water, building its house with air, a material which is immaterial, as you well under-

stand. Our spider had to make this 'diving bell' in order to eat his prey, a fresh-water shrimp. In the film it is seen tearing off air bubbles one after the other from the surface to make itself a bubble under water. It may sound quite paradoxical, and yet our eyes allow us to see, if I may say so, something that seems impossible."

This and many other seemingly illusory tableaux made the lighting configurations a series of logistical dilemmas that were invariably tackled with the inventiveness characteristic of the shoot. Comments Nuridsany, "We worked on special lighting, especially to help with the depth of field. We were obliged to have very high power, but [to protect the insects] we made sure the lighting didn't get too hot [in order to protect the insects]. We were obliged to have special filters which reflected the infrared part of the spectrum so that the lighting was not hot at all." The filters were used in conjunction with a lighting kit that included Cinepar 1200 LPMs with Robert Juliat dimming control shutters, as well as specially designed 250-watt dichroic lamp mini-spotlights, and micro-profiles with condenser lens systems that were used for "portrait shots" of the tiniest insects.

Multiple Balcar electronic flashes were used for special time-lapse sequences of flowers blooming and drops of dew evaporating. These scenes were shot with a Cameflex modified with an electronic synchronization program for single-frame shooting. The filmmakers also used a high-speed Photosonics model (capable of shooting 500 frames per second) to capture falling raindrops and a ladybug taking flight. A particularly dazzling dragonfly-in-flight scene was captured with a "Flying Cam" system provided by the Moving-Cam company, which is headquartered in both Belgium and Santa Monica; the rig consists of an ultra-light 35mm miniature camera mounted inside a remote-controlled model helicopter.

As enchanting as the film's photography is its sound, which Nuridsany hoped would "avoid a sensation of hypertrophy



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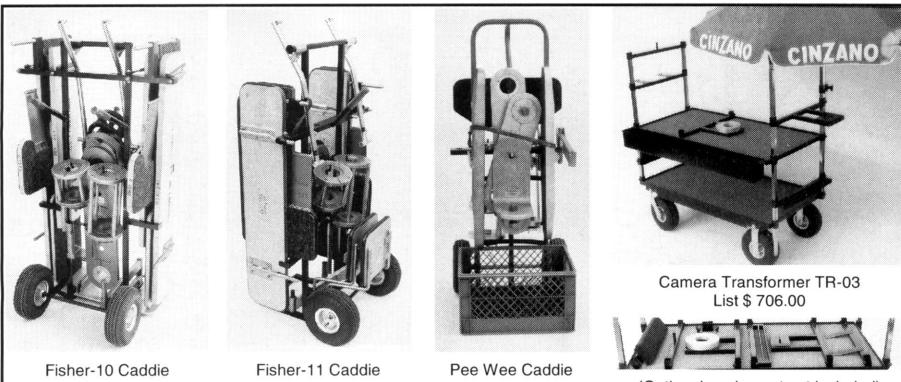
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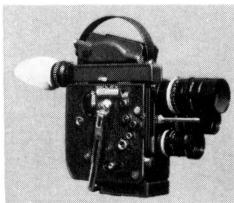
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that is sometimes created by sound close-ups." Instead of a direct audio recording, he and Perennou chose to blend the digital recordings of their subjects' actual stridulations and hummings with sound effects and Bruno Coulais' dreamy score. The effect is engrossing, especially in the cases of a sumptuously shot love scene between two snails, and a fight scene with beetles that plays like a medieval joust. In these two instances, Nuridsany was able to realize sequences that he had once only dreamed about.

Although the directors assiduously avoided the type of anthropomorphism on display in films like *Babe* or *101 Dalmatians*, scenes like the one involving the amorous escargots raise the film to a non-specific realm that bridges narrative and scientific filmmaking. Says Nuridsany, "Scientists have liked the film, because they saw and understood that this was not [strictly] a scientific movie. A lot of them remembered that first moment, before they became scientists, when they became mesmerized by this world. Nevertheless, we hope that people won't see the [insects] as animals, or as being [humanlike]. We more or less want viewers to see the insects as figures from another planet." ♦

L.A. Indie Film Fest

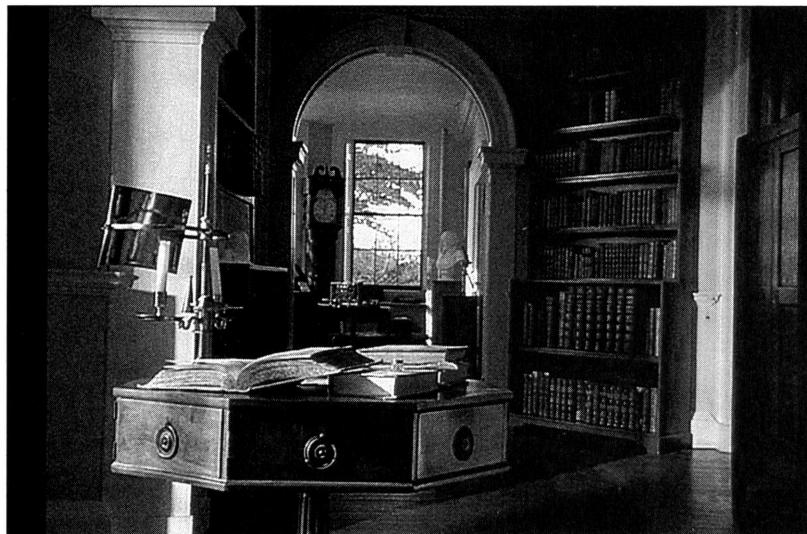
The Third Annual Los Angeles Film Festival is calling for submissions until January 15, 1997. Presented by the Sundance Channel and the Filmmakers Foundation, the LAIFF '97 will be held from April 3-7. The festival showcases the best independent films from around the country. Full-length feature films, shorts and documentaries completed after January 1, 1995 can be submitted on VHS, but a 16mm or 35mm print must be available for exhibition. For further information or a submission application, please call (213) 960-9460 or check out the LAIFF website at www.laiff.com.

Thomas Jefferson, the latest film from documentarian Ken Burns (*The Civil War, Baseball*) evokes the life of the third American president (1743-1826) through an exploration of his spectacular Virginia estate, Monticello, an approach dictated by the dearth of existing photographic material. In reference to Jefferson's era, the edifice itself was shot with very little use of artificial illumination. The shooting schedule for the documentary (which will be broadcast nationally on PBS in 90-minute segments on February 18 and 19) encompassed all four seasons to cap-

Thomas Jefferson Evokes Era of Enlightenment

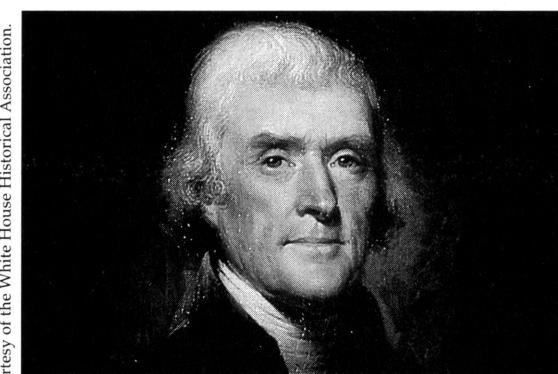
A trio of cinematographers help director Ken Burns create his latest historical documentary.

by Eric Rudolph



ture the changes in sunlight.

"Accuracy, obviously, is a primary concern in a historical film; we are trying to place the viewer in the past," says director of photography Allen Moore (*The Civil War, The Donner Party*), who shared cinematographic chores on *Thomas Jefferson* with Buddy Squires (*The Civil War, The Donner Party, The American West*), Peter Hutton and Burns himself. "When Jefferson lived at Monticello, the lighting was from the windows or candles, but we were not allowed to light any candles there. Instead, we used the natural light from the windows. Rarely were any lights brought inside the house. Often the sunlight was aided by a 1,200-watt HMI Par or Fresnel, placed outside the windows and gelled with a quarter or half CTO to warm up the light. We would also use an HMI to produce a light shaft, or to just



punch up the overall room level."

Squires, for his part, says that he found the small-scale lighting scheme to be quite liberating. "There's a great freedom in working with as much natural light as possible. We'd wait for the light to fall through a window and across a room a certain way. We waited a lot; we would do things like wait a week so the leaves would be fall-

ing, and wait most of a day for the light to be just right. You lose that freedom if you go in with a lot of lights and try to make it look just the way you want it to."

This minimalist lighting approach emerged from Burns' cinematic approach, which stresses mood and metaphor over strict meaning. Explains Moore, "When I shot interiors of sunlight coming in through the windows at Monticello, I exposed for the highlight and let the rest go black. I'd rather have the key light on a chess board or a T-square be the main focus — everything else that falls to darkness is the context of the central objects. The shadows, of course, hold the mystery, and lead to a much more interesting image than something that is evenly lit."

Squires concurs. "It's a very different way of working. We're not filming actors, so we can afford to lose our fear of the dark. With actors we would not be able to allow the large dark spaces we like to include in our shots. Cinematographers shooting actors have to worry more about detail in the shadows; we're okay as long as we have frames with some light throughout. The improvements in 16mm cinema technology have helped us; with the best lenses and stocks available today, and with great transfer facilities [see sidebar

Courtesy of the White House Historical Association.

Monticello provides Thomas Jefferson with its visual foundation. The structure was rarely lit, as the cinematographers relied primarily on natural sunlight. Designed by Jefferson himself (bottom, in portrait painted in 1800 by Rembrandt Peale), the national landmark's interiors were often shot at various frame rates (down to 6 fps) to take advantage of available light.

Right: The exterior of Monticello. Notes cameraman Allen Moore, "I've shot all over the world and have never seen anyplace more conducive to creating striking images." Bottom right: Director Ken Burns takes five. Opposite: Tape House vice president John Dowdell III displays the firm's new Spirit DataCine control bay.

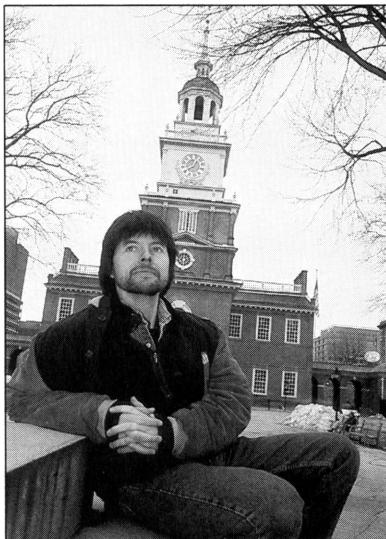


on the state-of-the-art film-to-video transfer of *Thomas Jefferson*], we're able to get more out of our shadows than we could have 10 years ago, with less grain."

Due to the minimal amount of available light, and the absence of actors, Moore and Squires did a fair amount of undercranking to gain another stop or two. "It's not unusual for us to shoot at 12 or 6 frames per second, allowing the slower shutter speed to put more light on the film," notes Moore. Kodak's 7248 was the primary stock on *Thomas Jefferson*, as it has been on most Burns' films. The director favors 7248 for its fine grain and because he finds that the 100 ASA tungsten stock has a warmer look than other stocks.

Lighting calculations within Monticello were complicated by the fact that the interiors are shielded from UV damage by gels that cover all of its windows. "The gels are like an ND 9 with a slight orange cast, like an 85 gel," says Moore. "We needed the direct sunlight the gels were there to stop, because we were mostly shooting 48. We opened the windows whenever we could, and had the cooperation of the caretakers so that, occasionally, we were able to take the gels off." This was crucial because, "in addition to blocking our light, the gels were not all perfectly flat against the windows, and could have distorted the images."

Since Monticello is an active tourist location, Moore and



Squires were forced to work around the constant influx of visitors during most of the shoot. Notes Moore, "We shot most of our exteriors at dawn or dusk, when the light is warmer, because Ken likes warm light. Also, Monticello is open to tourists every day but Christmas, I think, and we were rarely allowed to stop traffic. If we were there at sunrise when the sun was hitting the eastern face of the house, we knew it was too early for tourists, and we could do what we needed to. Of course, the quality of dawn and dusk light is widely acknowledged; it gives pleasing color saturation, longer shadows and a more interesting contrast range, which enhances the image."

Burns' minimalist, low-tech approach extends to his choice

of cameras — older Aaton LTRs (without time code, which the cinematographers generally find to be unnecessary on their historical films) were used almost exclusively. Allen Moore owns an Aaton 7 LTR, and shoots with his own Angenieux 12-120mm T2.1 and 9.5-57mm T1.8 lenses, as well as a Nikkor 200mm telephoto and 55mm macro. Squires owns an Aaton 54 LTR; he uses two zoom lenses, a Cooke 9-50mm T2.5 and the Zeiss 10-100 T2.0 for the bulk of his work. He also made extensive use of the Zeiss SuperSpeeds, specifically the 9mm and 25mm T1.3's, as well as a 12mm and 16mm. Squires' favored long lens is his Canon 300mm T2.8.

A true documentary purist, Burns has shot all of his films in the standard 16mm format. The director has never seriously entertained the idea of switching to 35mm, even following the ratings, home video and ancillary success of his various projects. Squires explains, "We work either completely alone or with very small crews — often just an assistant. We are light on our feet and work fast, and 35mm would slow us down. Another factor is that despite Ken's success, he still has to live within budgets. Plus, we have found that there is just no need to go to 35mm; we would gain little in image quality. By shooting carefully and taking advantage of today's best gear, film and transfer facilities, it is quite possible to make 16mm look like 35mm. Of course, if you're sloppy, and always use the fastest stock, then your footage is going to look like 16mm used to look 10 or 20 years ago."

This less-is-more approach also extends to the filming of archival material. As in Burns' other films, a great deal of *Thomas Jefferson* is spent panning across maps, etchings, paintings and old still photographs. Offers Squires, "The beauty of how we shoot archival material is its utter simplicity. It started with *Brooklyn Bridge*, when we had access to the original architectural drawings, which were frail and quite valuable. We, of course, thought, 'We'll put them on an Oxberry animation stand.' Well, archivists understandably do

Spirit DataCine Eases Manhattan Transfer

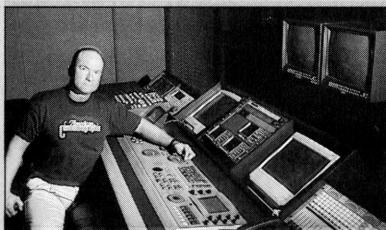


Photo by Eric Rudolph.

Cinematographers have a new tool to help them maintain the integrity of their cinematic visions on the home screen: the new \$2 million Spirit DataCine, jointly developed by Kodak and Philips. (see *AC* Sept. '96 p14). Only a few Spirits are currently in use, but a unit at New York's Tape House executed the film-to-videotape transfer of Ken Burns' three-hour PBS documentary *Thomas Jefferson*.

Tape House's vice president and telecine director, John Dowdell III, says that several innovations contribute to the superior picture quality obtained with the Spirit. "It creates a 2K file for each frame of film, which is a resolution of 2,000 lines. This is over-sampling for NTSC and PAL by an extremely wide margin, and over-sampling for HDTV by close to 100 percent.

"The Spirit makes 16mm look like really good 35mm," Dowdell maintains. "There is no flat look; flesh tones are elevated and the shadows are dark but rich. Basically, when you're looking at the monitor here, the images look like a big, beautiful professional still chrome."

Another key element of the Spirit is its Xenon light source, which emits light as close to the pure spectrum of sunlight as is possible via present techniques. With the abundance of wavelengths in the Xenon light source, "you get colors that no transfer machine has ever been able to get right, like gold and aquamarine," says Dowdell. "We used to tell the clients they didn't get those colors because of the limits of the SMPTE phosphors in the monitors. But the Spirit has so much of those particular colors in its wavelengths that it gives us magnificent golds and aquas, despite the limitations at the phosphors."

"The light source is instantly variable by six f-stops," he continues. "If a scene is really dense, I just punch more light through it, so you don't pick up the video noise from increasing the video gain to compensate for the density. In the 800 or so shots in the two 90-minute *Jefferson* shows, I never once had to clip a highlight. Because the light going through the film to the chip is optimized scene by scene, you get the most linear part of the CCD, and the result is this enormous contrast range."

The unit's film gate is a small slit, "so the film is held taut in case there's any buckle or warp. In other telecines, the film sits over a big gate, and if there is an imperfection in the film, the focus can be corrupted."

Dowdell was also rather impressed with the Spirit's ingenious pixel array. "There is a high-resolution CCD for the luminance information, and a single lower-resolution chip with RGB filters for the chroma. The low-resolution CCDs are much quieter, so the high-resolution luminance information is rather ingeniously merged with the low-resolution chroma information. The result of this merger is that there is no noise penalty for the use of the high-resolution luminance chips, while the speed, magnificent sharpness and detail they provide is retained. The image then goes to the spatial interpolator, which is basically a supercomputer, where the 2K images are filtered and scaled down to whatever you want, 525 or 625 or 1125 HDTV."

Given the static shots so common to Burns' documentary work, the Spirit's absolute stability proved vital to *Thomas Jefferson*. Remarks Dowdell, "The images look as if they are pin-registered, and there's no weave at all. When one of a competing [telecine] company saw the *Thomas Jefferson* footage at the International Broadcaster's Conference in Amsterdam, they thought we had cheated by putting the film through an image stabilization device like a Flame — which, of course, is absurd."

—E.R.

See article in March issue of
American Cinematographer

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not want to let this old material out of their sight.

"Instead, we put my Eclair ACL on a tripod, with a 9.5-57mm Angenieux zoom, and placed these frail, old drawings on the floor on a tilted board, to try to keep the material parallel to the film plane. But the results were terrible, and we could not keep it parallel. One day, Amy Steckler [of Burns' company, Florentine Films] came up with a solution. She had been looking at her refrigerator, and she suggested that we get a piece of flat ferrous metal and stick the material to it with magnets. It worked wonderfully. We do it that way to this day, shooting most of the flat art standing vertically, camera on a tripod, moved by hand."

Burns' cinematographers have found that not using an animation stand has been an aesthetic blessing. Says Moore, "The human feel is much more evocative than a move on an animation stand, and the viewer finds more empathy when the camera is moved by hand. Ken likes to turn the tables when combining archival material and present-day footage; his idea is that the archival material should become a live-action event, and that the live landscape should be like an archival image, a moment frozen in time, with the timeless quality of an old photograph."

The filmmakers do use an animation stand when filming certain material and pieces of artwork. If the shot involves bound volumes or items too frail to be hung by magnets to the metal easel, a still photographer takes an 8" x 10" chrome with a view camera, which is then shot on an animation stand. Says Squires, "Anything on which we need a zoom, or a move that needs to be precisely timed, is done on an Oxberry."

Lighting for reflective flat art was created with two Lowell Tota-Lights bounced into umbrellas at 45-degree angles to the easel. Expounds Squires, "We shot all of the flat art on 48, at T5.6. Of course, most lenses are sharpest one or two stops down from wide open, so we've just standardized it at T5.6." These images were captured solely with prime lenses: a Cooke 75mm and a Nikkor 55mm macro.

To gain some respite from the requisite talking heads and archival material, Burns regularly recruits experimental filmmaker Peter Hutton to bring his "expressionistic language" to the films. Hutton, the current Chairman of Bard College's film department, taught Burns, Squires and other documentarians at Hampshire College 18 years ago. Now, Burns solicits Hutton to produce evocative black-and-white time-lapse sequences in historical locations. Says Hutton, "These little segments for Ken's films are derived from my own interest in getting cinema down to the essential ingredients of light and movement. In my own personal work, I do portraits of cities and landscapes, always in black-and-white, always looking to bring filmmaking down to those essential elements."

"In *Thomas Jefferson*, I did a series of light studies at Monticello, all time-lapse black-and-white, of light traveling through the rooms. Jefferson was interested in skylights, and there are a lot of fascinating opportunities to play with light there. I practice contemplative cinematography. I never use any lights, just natural illumination. On this project, it was just me and the camera, a little Bolex with a couple of high-quality prime lenses on the turret, sitting in a room at Monticello waiting for the light to move through it while clicking off single frames."

After spending considerable time canvassing Monticello, both Moore and Squires maintain that the national monument's inherent splendor was ample compensation for all of the obstacles that had to be overcome. Notes Moore, "I've shot all over the world and have never seen anyplace more conducive to creating striking images than Monticello. Thomas Jefferson chose an incredibly spectacular location; the gardens, the house, and the landscape are so well thought-out and planned, it is almost impossible not to make beautiful pictures there." ♦

The tigers that thrive in the remote, boundless forests of Siberia's Sikhote-Alin Reserve dart through the frigid woods with the stealth of silent phantoms. So elusive are these feline creatures that as of a few years ago, the only images of them in existence were a scant number of black-and-white stills. But now, producer/director Mark Stouffer and cinematographer Bill Mills have become the first to capture these tigers on motion picture film in their native habitat. The determined documentarians braved the rugged Siberian outback four times over four seasons to shoot the hour-long National Geographic special *Tigers of the Snow*. (At press time NBC had not yet set a final airdate.)

Though Stouffer is a veteran director of National Geographic specials (*Braving Alaska*, *Survivors of the Skeleton Coast*, and the Emmy Award-winning *Secrets of the Wild Panda*), he considers *Tigers* his most challenging project to date. Recalls the director, "The tigers were ferocious, the temperature went down to 40° below, we were infested with ticks carrying deadly encephalitis, and we had to ride in Aeroflot helicopters, considered to be the most dangerous air transportation system in the world, to get necessary aerial shots. Fortunately, the flight crew turned out to be extremely talented, and handled the tough requirements for our photography well."

Due to the Siberian tiger's evasive nature, Stouffer had originally targeted the film for a 15-minute running time. The director opted for a full-length documentary only after witnessing an intense live tiger-capture program during a location scout in Russia. Soon after giving the project the go-ahead, Stouffer learned that Russian biologist Victor Yudin was to release into the wild two tiger cubs that he had raised in captivity. Their liberation, which would be included in the footage, was to occur in a matter of weeks. This left

Frosty Felines

The National Geographic Society continues its longstanding dedication to the documentary format with *Tigers of the Snow*.

by Brooke Comer

Photos by Mark J. Stouffer, courtesy of National Geographic.



the filmmakers with little preproduction time.

Stouffer quickly assembled his crew. Based on the strengths of Mills' prior projects *Underwater Oases* (for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources), *Manatees* (World of Audubon) and the feature *Wild America* (Morgan Creek Productions), the director was convinced that the cameraman could meet the cinematographic demands of shooting an elusive animal in the Siberian wilderness. Previously, Mills has used his

With their dwindling worldwide population standing at 250, the elusive Siberian tigers are captured for the first time on motion picture film in *Tigers of the Snow*. Documentarians Stouffer and Mills found helicopters to be the most effective vantage point from which to photograph the animals.

Aaton LTR-7 camera and Angenieux lenses for hundreds of projects, including a TBS *Portrait of America* series. *Tigers* gave him the opportunity to upgrade his equipment, since National Geographic specials are currently shot only on Super 16, which will allow broadcasters to retain the films' original format when HDTV comes to home viewing.

After a discussion with Peter Abel at New York's Abel Cinetech, Mills selected the Aaton XTR PROD, a camera that offers pre-set speeds from 12 to 75 fps, with variables to the third decimal for all speeds in between. He also appreciated the XTR viewfinder's illuminating reticule, which proved very helpful during night shoots, and the camera's internal heating system, "which keeps the movement at a constant temperature in extreme cold-weather filming." As a back up camera, Stouffer brought along his own Arri SR Super 16. "I love the Aaton, as long as

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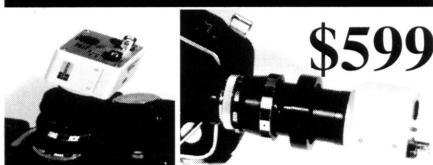


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Cameraman Bill Mills (far left) gets a close-up of a tranquilized tiger as it is examined by the research team.

the temperature stays above 15 degrees," says Mills. "From 15 degrees to 40 below, I used the Arri, which is more dependable in wet, cold weather."

Filtration was minimal, and included just a standard selection of NDs, color grads, and 85 series filters. Says Mills, "We wanted those crisp, sharp images that we could get in the winter light. During the other seasons, the atmospheric conditions in the lush forests created a natural mystical effect."

Mills chose a Canon 11.5-138mm T2.3 zoom as his primary lens. He interchanged that with a Canon 300mm T2.8, as well as two other zooms: a Nikkor 50-300mm and a Canon 150-600mm. In addition, a Zeiss 12mm SuperSpeed was used for time-lapse sequences. The production spent some 260 400' rolls of Kodak film: 7293 was chosen for night shoots for its fine grain, and because its wide latitude allows for ratings of 250, 400 and 500 ASA; 7248 became the daylight stock due to the director's observation that its grain matched that of the 93; and 7296 surfaced for certain night sequences, which included the tigers stalking and killing prey during their hunts.

Mills says that while daytime shoots did not require any additional lighting, night filming presented a unique set of challenges. Stouffer always tries to avoid complicated lighting setups

on documentaries, for the obvious reason that they take up too much time, during which spontaneity can be lost. "The Siberian tiger is a nocturnal animal," Stouffer points out, "so we gave particular attention to night lighting. There was little, if any, electricity in the Russian Far East, and on our initial trip we carried two small generators to charge batteries and serve as power plants for the small tungsten units we carried."

During night shoots, Mills used only practical lighting. The film's principal human subjects, Dr. Maurice Hornicker (the world's foremost specialist in big cats) and his partner, Dr. Howard Quigley, always carried various units, including "one-million foot-candle, handheld spotlights for source lighting, and gas-operated lanterns for ambience."

Even when all of the tools were in place, the filmmakers spent weeks trying to coax their reclusive stars into photographic range. The team had set up a Trailmaster — a remote tripping system that would trigger the operation of both lights and cameras if an animal walked through its sensors — but the huge reserve where the film was shot is home to just 20 of the world's 250 Siberian tigers, meaning that the chances of one of them walking by was infinitesimal. "We lacerated ourselves on trees, pulling camera equipment high into the branches; set out wild meat baits; and even used squealing-pig sound effects to try to lure them in," says Mills. "But none of our strategies

worked." The only remaining alternative was aerial photography.

Since it was impossible to get a professional helicopter system like a Tyler mount into Siberia, the crew had to rig their own. Recalls Stouffer, "It was as crude as you could imagine. We strung bungee cords in an X pattern from the four corners of the open helicopter door, affixed the camera to a plate, and had an electric gyro spinning onto the plate to stabilize the image. The only other thing that made the aerial shots so smooth was Bill Mills' exquisite shooting; he held the camera perfectly still."

Stouffer and Mills flew dangerously low — below treeline level — while tracking and locating tigers in treacherous terrain that included precipitous mountain peaks. "The pilots were clipping trees with the rudder, sending branches flying, and they couldn't land in the tall trees," says Stouffer. When a tiger was spotted, Mills and Stouffer descended on 300-foot rusty cables with all of their equipment, suspended in homemade harnesses. The pair had no helmets, goggles, "or even a grounding element on the cable to keep us from getting blown to smithereens by static electricity when we hit the ground," the director reminisces. "We had to hang a big C-clamp at the end of the cable so that it would hit the ground first."

Once a "tiger" area was located, the crew would search for hours until one of the animals materialized. Tigers wearing radio tracking collars, attached by Russian and American scientists on previous expeditions, were easier to locate, and led the documentary crew back to their families. Explains Mills, "The Siberian tigers are much more challenging to shoot than say, the Bengal tigers in India, where photographers can ride elephants, or drive out in land rovers to film them. Our approach was to convey that sense of mystery about the Siberian tigers by photographing their body parts masked by trees, a paw moving through the underbrush, or an eye peeking out through the foliage."

During the crew's hunt for subjects, the deadly nature of the

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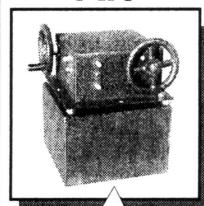
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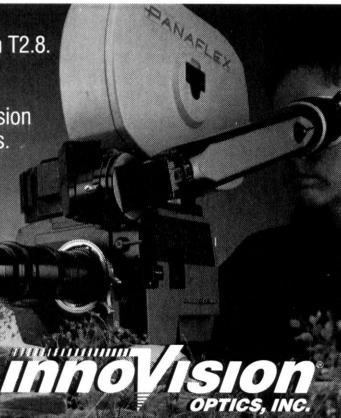
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beasts was not forgotten, particularly when the filmmakers had wrapped the day's filming. Says Stouffer, "After the biologists would catch the tigers with a foot snare, we could get close enough for good photography, knowing all the time that if the tiger were to break loose, someone would be killed. Siberian tigers are nothing short of monsters when they're angry and aggressive. At all times, we knew that we would be tasty tiger food. It was even a concern when we camped out at night; we'd find tiger prints 200 feet from where we slept, and our only defense was a cayenne pepper-based anti-predator spray called Counter Assault, and some Russian-made flares that shoot columns of flame five feet out. We felt so confident with our four flares — but we later found that only *one* of them worked."

Despite these perils, the team experienced and photographed one of the film's most thrilling scenes when they entered a tiger's den to get footage of a five-week-old cub. The first phase of production had wrapped and the team was back in America when Dr. Quigley informed Stouffer that one of the collared tigers had given birth, and that her lair had been found. Excited by the opportunity to film a Siberian cub in the wild, the crew returned to the Far East.

Back in Siberia, Stouffer, Mills and camera assistant David Huie waited a week for the mother tiger to leave her cub to hunt for food. When she finally did vacate the den, American biologist Dale Miquelle entered — in full knowledge that the angry mother could return at any moment — and carried out the cub while wearing gloves scented with tiger urine. "It's a myth that animal mothers reject their young if they've been handled by humans," says Mills. "But still, we made sure there was no human scent left on the cub." Just as the shooting had completed, a crew member tracking the mother tiger by way of her radio collar signaled that she was about to return. The cub was quickly placed back in his nest, and the filmmakers got away in the nick of time. ♦

Zsigmond Drives Through McDonald's

by Mary Hardesty

Even though Academy Award-winning cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC (*McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Ghost and the Darkness*) no longer operates CDI, his commercial production company, he still shoots commercials when he's between features. One of his recent ventures into the commercial field was a spot for McDonald's, which might seem like an incongruous assignment for a cinematographer who has worked with such directors as Robert Altman, Steven Spielberg and Richard Donner. Traditionally, advertising projects of this type can be fraught

with artistic conflicts, since large Fortune 500 clients often take tight hold of the creative reigns in order to protect their products.

But the arrangement begins to make sense when Zsigmond explains that the company that produced the spot, Dark Light, is run by many of his own former employees, and is in fact owned by his good friend, cinematographer Caleb Deschanel, ASC (*The Right Stuff*, *Fly Away Home*). An additional lure was that the spot was directed by feature filmmaker Michael Lehmann (*Heathers*, *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*). Says Zsigmond, "I love it when feature directors take on commercials, because they have a lot of live-action experience and can get great performances out of actors."

Titled "Zoom," the 30-second McDonald's spot sets out to prove that the restaurant chain delivers what can truly be termed "fast food." This point is made humorously as motorists pull up to a drive-through window at blinding

speed and are met by a cheerful young woman who talks a mile a minute and fills their orders in the blink of an eye.

As the filmmakers soon learned, hamburgers aren't the only thing McDonald's wants delivered in a speedy manner. The job was awarded on a Friday; Zsigmond, director Lehmann, gaffer Bobby Jason, key grip T.D. Scaringi and assistant cameraman Tony Nagy tested

"We used a lot of lights on this shoot because we needed to make the finished spot look as if it had been filmed in just 30 seconds."

— Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC

and prelit during the following Monday at a specially built McDonald's store in San Bernardino, CA, and shot on the very next day.

Zsigmond's first task was to help Lehmann achieve the fast-motion effect involving the cars. After conducting several tests, they elected to shoot the cars and talent separately, then digitally composite the scenes in postproduction to create the illusion that the cars were whipping by at improbable speeds. "We did a test with a speed-controlled camera to accelerate the cars, but that effect doesn't really work with commercials because it takes a few seconds for the camera to switch from one speed to the next, and you can miss the moment," recalls the cameraman, who shot the spot with a Panastar camera (capable of speeds from 6-120 fps) on Kodak's 200 ASA 5293 stock. "I'm a firm believer in using 93 for exteriors and also for interiors as often as possible. It's such a wonderful film, and I don't think the [Vision] 500T will replace it because



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Munich	Dedo Weigert	49-89-35-616-01
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Paris	Key Lite	331-4984-0101
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we've never had such a good film. You can do everything with it."

Zsigmond had tried different frame rates before settling upon 12 fps, but he found that if the cars were sped up too much, they would move so fast through the scene that they would hardly be noticeable. Notes the cinematographer, "I didn't have to test any other cameras or lenses because I knew what image size I needed. I went with the Primo 11:1 zoom, which is probably the best zoom lens around."

Filming at 12 fps worked fine for the long shots, but Zsigmond relied on operating techniques to create the illusion of speed in the close-ups. "Those shots didn't have to be exaggerated through undercranking," relates the cinematographer. "Instead, I used swish-pans and camera moves to suggest speed, and locked the camera down at a side angle in front of the drive-through window so we could also see a bit of what was going on inside. That way the director only had to worry about getting a good performance, which was tricky because he had to get the actress to play it straight and make it look like business as usual, while delivering her words very quickly."

Despite the natural daylight look of the end result, Zsigmond and his crew actually lit the spot with a number of 12K HMI fixtures. "We used a lot of lights on this shoot because we needed to make the finished spot look as if it had been filmed in just 30 seconds. Given the undercranking technique we used, the natural sunlight would have given our trick away. We put a butterfly over the whole area in order to maintain the lighting continuity. I didn't want the sun to directly hit the building and window area, so we used HMs even if the sun could have done the job in order to maintain the same look all the way through. The butterfly stayed up until the sun came around so much that we didn't need it anymore; at that point, the butterfly was replaced with some bounce light to maintain the natural look."

Credits

Client: McDonald's

Title: "Zoom"

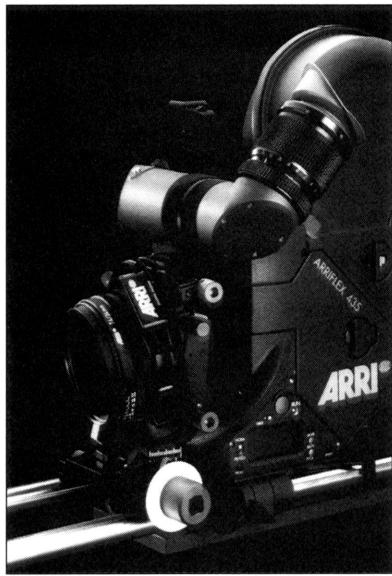
Agency: Leo Burnett/Chicago

Director: Michael Lehmann

Cinematographer: Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC

Production Company: Dark Light Pictures

compiled by Andrew O. Thompson



New Arri Gear

Arri's new Steadicam magazine is made of a special carbon-fiber laminate which keeps it lightweight yet rugged enough to withstand the harsh demands of location production. Like the conventional 400-foot magazine for the Arriflex 435, the Steadicam version is mechanically driven and can be used for high-speed operation from 1 to 150 fps, forward or reverse; it can also be used for time code recording. The vertical orientation of the film reels provide even film take-up, and maintains stable camera balance while rigged onto the Steadicam. For added versatility, a low mode bracket is available for added versatility; this mounts conveniently on top of the finder system, adding lightweight support to clamp-on accessories.

The new integrated video assist system for the Arriflex 435 is fully fused into the camera body. The fast optics (aperture 1:1.4) and highly sensitive CCD chip ensure superb color image quality, even in poor lighting situations. The image is absolutely flicker-free

within a speed range of 5 to 150 fps. The slim, compact unit houses the control panel and all electronic components. The traditional video elbow was replaced by a small module consisting of highly efficient optical elements and a CCD sensor. The complete system adds a mere .9 inches (22mm) to the width of the camera while increasing its weight by only 1.5 pounds. The module fits conveniently between the basic camera electronics and the expanded electronic function component. With this system it is possible to insert different image format frames, camera status display and time code information.

The new AVF-2 anamorphic viewfinder (also for the Arriflex 435) de-squeezes the image in the viewfinder when anamorphic lenses are used. A mechanical knob, conveniently located in the viewfinder, makes it effortless to switch between de-squeezed and squeezed viewing. The viewfinder maintains full flexibility and can be quickly pivoted from the left to the right side of the camera.

Arri has also recently introduced a new set of lenses and lens adapters to its shift-and-tilt bellows system. The new additions include a 20mm/T2.8 lens and 150mm/T2.8, a PL-adapter that allows for the mounting of Arri macro lenses, and a retro adapter that allows for the mounting of the shift-and-tilt lenses in retro focus position, for extreme enlargement effects.

The new FF-4 universal follow-focus weighs only 1.5 pounds (700g). The unique design concept allows the unit to work with all Arri support systems, including the lightweight support and the 15mm and 19mm rod systems, for which adapters are available. The unit is equipped with single-speed focus knobs that can be attached to either side of the camera. Accessories for the FF-3 and FF-

4 follow-focus systems are fully interchangeable.

Arriflex, (818) 841-7070, Fax (818) 848-4028.



Jib Stix Tripod

Cinekinetic has released the second generation of their tripod. Designed primarily to support any tripod-mounted jib arm, the new model overcomes one of the biggest problems of light- and medium-weight tripods — whip. Jib Stix's construction and design give it a recommended maximum capacity of 250 pounds; this is comparable to the limits of heavy-weight tripods. The unit comes with a 100mm bowl. Cinekinetic also offers a variety of non-standard bowls as optional extras, including the 150mm bowl and Mitchell mount. A single-action lever locks the legs securely, eliminating slippage. Etched colored markings on the legs make leveling simple and convenient.

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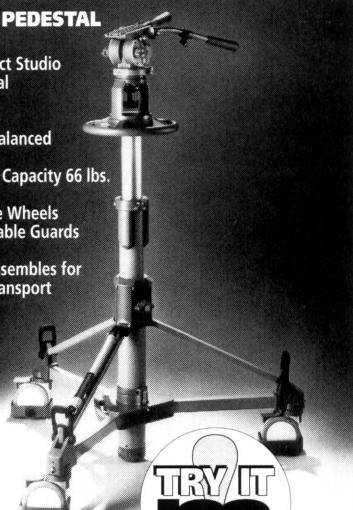
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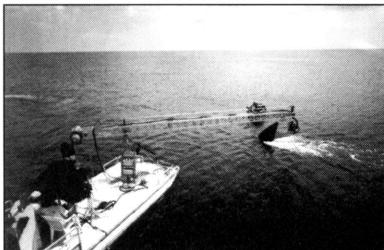
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The specially designed, multi-functioning spreader knob secures the tripod legs during normal usage. The knob is unique because it also locks the legs together for transport. It also features rubber feet that offer maximum stability. The mounting brackets on the tripod legs let the operator mount the spreader interchangeably at ground level and mid-range. With the spreader attached, the Jib Stix weighs 21 pounds. When collapsed, the length of the tripod measures only 33 inches.

Cinekinetic USA, (702) 731-4700, e-mail, cinekine@ois.com.au.



Amphibious Crane

Mako Products, a manufacturer of water-related motion picture equipment, now offers the Aqua Crane. The unit is capable of boomeranging from minus 2' underwater to 25' high. The camera's pan-and-tilt robotics are completely waterproof, and work equally as well on the water as they do on land. The crane can also be mounted on a pontoon boat and operated at speeds of 25 mph or less.

Jordan Klein Film and Video, (352) 288-6060, Fax (352) 288-5538.

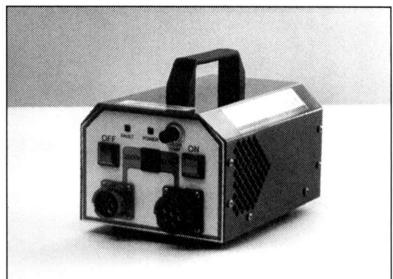
Lightweight Camera Crane

The JNS Company introduces the EZ-FX camera crane. The 27-pound apparatus folds into a compact, portable unit and can lift a 50-pound camera from floor level to 10 feet high and 360 degrees around. It mounts to a flat plate as well as 100mm or 75mm claw-ball tripod systems. Equipped with a brake system, it can be locked into infinite camera angles for still shooting. Made of high-quality aluminum, the crane is powder-coated with a black wrinkle finish.

An accessory to this crane is the EZ Arm. This patent-pending device works in conjunction with the crane and the pan/tilt head. One can control the pan-and-tilt of the camera through the entire range of the crane's movement, even with the camera four feet above the

operator's head. The device is purely mechanical, using the pan-and-tilt friction and fluid motion of the head to accommodate the operator's shooting style. Unlike other remote control devices, there are no servo motors or joysticks for the operator to learn.

The JNS Company, (800) 541-5706, Fax (407) 296-7188.



Flicker-Free Electronic Ballast

Cinemills Corporation introduces the compact 200/575W "World" dual-operation, flicker-free electronic ballast; its design utilizes surface-mounted mini-boards packaged into a compact system weighing less than seven pounds. The unit is whisper-quiet and constructed of durable aluminum, is 25 percent dimmer-controlled, and has auto input voltage select (90-130V and 180-260V AC 50/60 Hz). The electronic ballast is also available in a custom travel case, patterned to include either a 200W or 575W head, the ballast, Chimera light bank and ring, four-piece diffusion set, four-piece lens set, Fresnel lens, barndoors, cable and globe.

Cinemills Corporation, (818) 843-4560, Fax (818) 843-7834.



Drive System Speed Control

Allen Products announces a new closed-loop drive system speed control that is now standard on most film processors. The system automatically adjusts voltage to the drive motor should there be any kind of voltage fluctuation during operation. As a result, processing speed is constant — thus, the time film

“When I got to New York for the shoot, some of the equipment I’d been promised wasn’t available after all. So I finally said: Give me the phone...”

“Most of the time, I take Clairmont equipment with me on location,” says Michael Givens. “Even to places as far away as France and Italy and Hong Kong. I’ve also taken it to shoots in Canada, Mexico and New York.”

Shipping costs

“But on one job I did for a New York production company, the finance people there questioned the shipping costs in my budget. So the company decided the camera gear should be rented in New York. ‘Everything you’ll need is here,’ they told me.”

Crucial filters

“This commercial called for 200, 300 and 600mm Nikons; and I needed a wide range of corals and soft-cons and correction filters. Grads would have been helpful—but those would require Clairmont’s rear-mounted rotating stages.”

Not available

“I arrived with my own set of 40.5mm filters that I use with Clairmont’s Nikons. But the Nikons rented by the company had 48mm rear-mount threads; and you could use only one filter at a time. Anyway, the filter range I needed wasn’t available in 48mm, anywhere in town.”

“So I finally called Clairmont and explained the mess to Terry. He put three of his PL mount



Michael Givens has been a Director/Cameraman since 1990, directing TV spots for (among others) Club Med, DHL, Federal Express, GMC and Reebok. His D.P. credits include AT&T, Chanel No. 5, Kellogg's, Lark, Marlboro, Michelob and Nissan.

Director/Cameraman Michael Givens

Nikon telephotos and all the grad filters I asked for onto the next plane out of L.A.”

Buttoned up

“And I knew I could trust those Clairmont Nikons. The camera department should be the most buttoned-up on the set. That has always been important to me—ever since I was an Assistant. Now that I’m wearing two hats, I want tools I’m familiar with, from a place I’m familiar with.”

“I work a lot of remote and difficult locations,” says Mr. Givens. “Out there, it’s going to take some time to replace anything that breaks, no matter who you rented it from. So it’s mega-important to go with cameras and lenses that the right people have serviced.”

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spends in all solutions is also kept constant for the process being used. Another aspect of this system is the digital readout of actual speed, which makes it convenient to monitor processing speeds. To further enhance its processors, Allen has included an RS-232 port for computer feed. In addition, the adjustment control for processing speed has been changed. Previously, there was a control knob which, if inadvertently hit, might change the speed. This has been replaced with an easy-to-use touch pad that simplifies speed adjustment.

Allen Products, (203) 878-7454, Fax (203) 877-6346.

Stainless Steel Shot Bag

Lowing Products' stainless steel shot bag is corrosion-proof, unlike lead or steel ballast bags, absolutely non-toxic, and is half the size of a sandbag of equal weight. The bag is constructed out of Cordura 1000 denier nylon, double-stitched nylon thread, nickel plated grommets and stainless steel shot. The bag is chemically inert, easy to clean and comes in 15-, 25- and 35-pound standard bags, as well as the 25-pound butterfly style.

Lowing Products, (800) 577-7500, e-mail, LightToGo@aol.com.

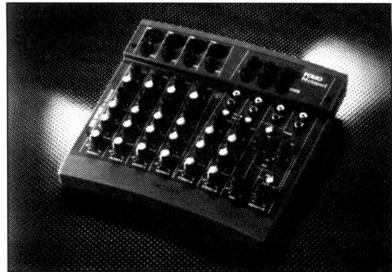
Gaffer Tape

Pro Tapes and Specialties introduces Pro-Gaffer tape in a shade of vivid purple. This cloth tape is vinyl-imregnated and non-reflective. It features a non-skid backing and a high-temperature adhesive, making it ideal for such jobs as set and stage decoration and for holding and securing lighting equipment. As with all other Pro Tapes gaffer tapes, the purple type is available in a wide range of sizes.

Pro Tapes and Specialties, (800) 345-0234, Fax (908) 346-0777.

Folio Notepad and Consoles

Spirit now offers the Folio Notepad, which, despite its diminutive size, achieves DAT-quality audio as a result of its surface-mount design and use of components common to larger Spirit consoles. The compact multimedia mixer boasts high RF rejection for clean, noise-free performance, and is equipped with high-quality mike preamps capable of accepting up to 12dBu of input level



with a low EIN. A versatile, portable mixer for both live and studio applications, the Notepad offers the following features: 10 inputs as standard, four mike inputs, two stereo inputs; studio-quality mike preamps with 50dB of gain range; two-band EQ on every mono input; dedicated stereo effects return; global +48V phantom power; stereo inputs equipped with switchable RIAA preamps for turntables; separate mix and monitor outputs; peak and VU metering, headphone output, power indicator; and custom-designed rotary controls with consistent, accurate responses.

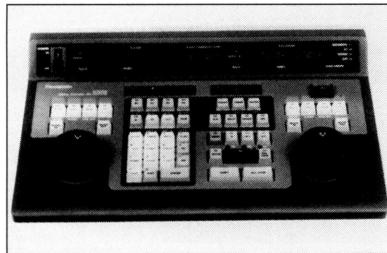
Spirit has also unveiled the four-bus Folio SX — the first in a new generation of cost-effective, feature-loaded Folio consoles. Designed by Graham Blyth, the unit delivers digital-quality sound in both live and recording applications. With a total of 20 inputs and 18 outputs (including auxes and direct outs) offered as standard, the mixer's 12 mono mike/line channels are all equipped with Spirit's UltraMic preamp; this preamp provides a wide 60dB gain range and +22dBu of headroom, ensuring that the input stage can easily accommodate any mike or line-level device.

In addition to mix outs, two subgroup busses allow groups of instruments to be sent to multi-track recorders and additional speakers, or to be subgrouped to mix. Four stereo inputs for keyboards and other stereo instruments are also available, as are eight direct outs and a switchable pre/post fader, making the Folio SX adept at both studio and live recording. A true three-band EQ with sweepable mids utilizes custom-designed potentiometers to provide even and consistent response around the entire sweep. Steep 18dB-per-octave high-pass filters on each channel effectively eliminate low-frequency rumble.

Three auxiliary sends are offered, two of which may be assigned pre/post fader for use in live performances

requiring extra monitors, or in recording applications needing additional effects devices. For accurate control at mixdown, 100mm faders are used throughout. A separate mono output with level control and two subgroup outputs are also available.

Spirit by Soundcraft, Inc. (916) 888-0480, Fax (916) 888-0480.



Multi-Event Edit Controller

Panasonic Broadcast and Television Systems Company has announced the AG-A850, the multi-event editing controller. Equipped with five RS-422 (9-pin) VTR remote terminals, the AG-A850 controls five VTRs (three recorders and two source players), allowing simultaneous production of three videotapes. Alternatively, the edit controller can perform A/B roll editing, selecting from four source players and editing to one recorder.

Ideal for a variety of applications, the AG-A850 boasts a multi-event memory that stores up to 512 events. This edited data can be retained in memory for up to three days or can be downloaded to a computer for permanent storage. Two sets of jog and shuttle dials provide simultaneous control of both source and recorder, while a 10-key pad adds convenience for entering edit points. The AG-A850 provides two GPI ports (RCA jacks), one of which can be set for two operations in one event, providing control of a CD, DVE, character generator or any device that has a GPI input terminal.

Additional features include monitor display output, four-channel audio editing, plus/minus 0 frame-accurate editing, time code capability, audio split editing, slow-motion editing (with slow-motion VTR), and auto tag for match-frame editing.

Panasonic, (201) 392-4319.

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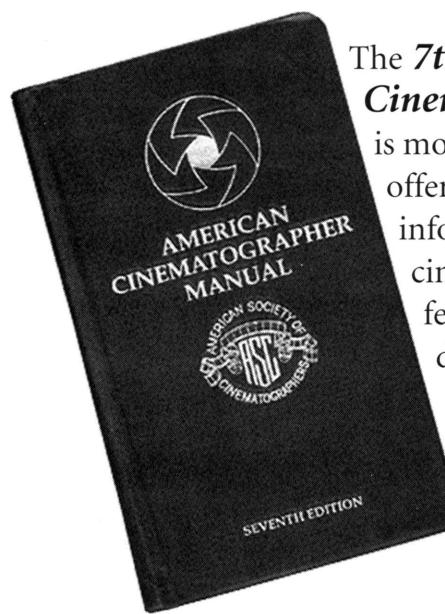
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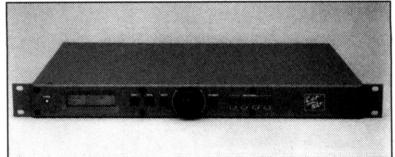
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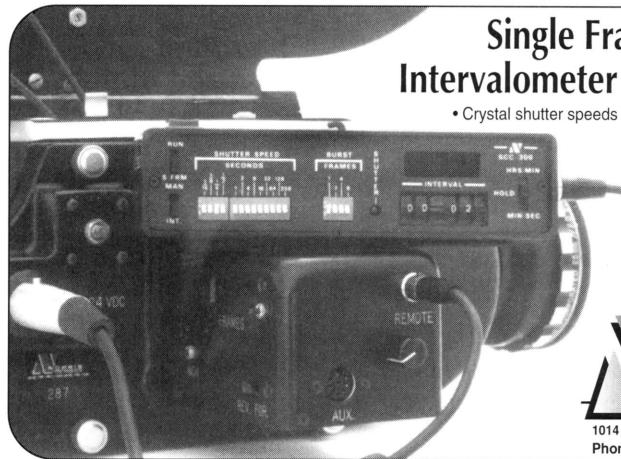
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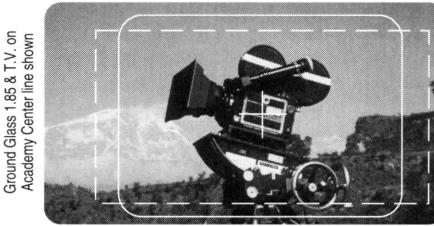
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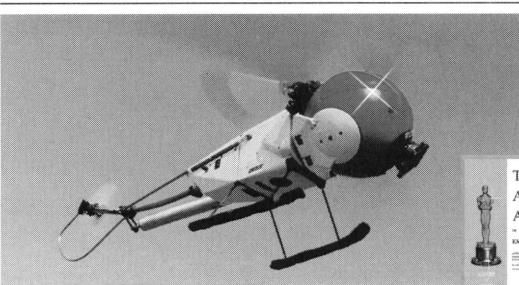
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Minolta, (201) 825-4000. ♦

Fire Sets Traditional Indian Family Values Ablaze

by Brooke Comer

Deepa Mehta's *Fire*, shown at last year's Toronto and New York Film Festivals, centers on Sita (Nandita Das), a newly-wed in an arranged marriage whose self-determination ruins the traditional order of a New Delhi family. After leaving home to join the household of husband Jatin (Jaaveed Jaaferi), Sita comes to the rapid realization that her spouse has no intention of forsaking his mistress. Instead of adopting the mask of obedient servitude expected of Indian wives, Sita and her sister-in-law Radha (Shabana Azmi, India's premiere actress) free themselves from their stifling marital roles and form a relationship that bursts the boundaries of conventional love.

According to Mehta, the idea for *Fire*, the first film both written and directed by the Indian-born filmmaker (*Sam and Me, Camilla*) "grew out of the many complex events I saw in the unfolding of the arranged marriages of my mother and her sisters. In each case, these vibrant, intelligent women left the comfort and security of their homes to be subsumed by the unfamiliar environment of virtual strangers. Their radical adjustment to an unknown husband and the assumption of his family as their own was not done without difficulty. It often took them many years to adjust."

The nature of Sita and Radha's alternative lifestyle, however, was not the kind of subject matter favored by the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which scans scripts of all proposed Indian films for subject matter offensive to traditional societal sensibilities. The lesbianism detailed in *Fire* left the director concerned that her script would not be approved. As Mehta feared, the woman-to-woman love scenes had to be excised "because [Ministry officials] said that lesbianism doesn't exist in India."

Mehta's cinematographer on *Fire* was British native Giles Nuttgens, with whom she had collaborated previously on an India location shoot for the Lucasfilm TV series *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*. Comments the director, "I like Giles' style so much — it's so bizarre and beautiful. I love his white highlights, which are incredibly subtle and warm, and we both share a love of dark spaces. When you work with someone who understands exactly what you want, there's a kind of shorthand. And since Giles had worked in India before, he was familiar with the quality of the light there, the pollution, and how you can make it work for you."

With their creative symbiosis already established, Mehta and Nuttgens had little trouble devising a definite color scheme for *Fire* that reflected the warmth hinted at by the film's title. Remarks Mehta, "I also didn't want any blues, because of that color's coldness. It works well in some cases in North America, but not for this particular film. All of the colors I chose are warm; the palette is green, orange and off-white." Mehta chose not to amplify color by using gels. "I hate gels," says the director unabashedly.

Due to the inclusion of some handheld scenes, the cinematographer chose a versatile, lightweight Arriflex camera outfitted with prime lenses, primarily a 35mm with additional use of an 18mm. The director's penchant for blocking out the entire film with the actors prior to the shoot (as opposed to using storyboards) helped her determine the type of camera movement most suitable for *Fire*. Explains Mehta, "I love choreographing scenes; it lends a certain fluidity to the camera work. During this process, we discovered that we wanted the camera to move constantly, but with

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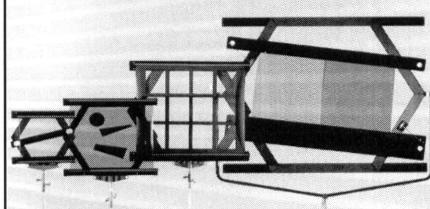
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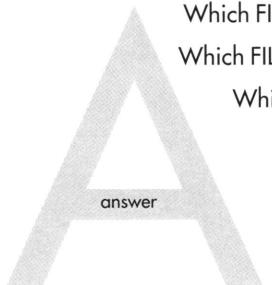
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subtlety." Mehta and Nuttgens were forced to import their lighting fixtures (including 12Ks and 14Ks) from England, since all of India's larger lighting houses were booked by the time *Fire* went into preproduction; the nation's thriving film industry, centered in Bombay, churns out approximately 1,500 more films per year than Hollywood.

The biggest production challenge during the making of *Fire* the ever-changing locations, which often became inaccessible at the eleventh hour. "We had to be very flexible," says Mehta, "because we kept losing locations that we'd been assured would be available. In one instance, for whatever reason, no one had bothered to tell us that [our location] was a sacred area, and that family prayers would be going on all day." Mehta refused to give up her desired locale; instead, she managed to convince the devout families to take a respite from their prayers so that her crew could begin shooting.

The filmmaker also credits her actors for delivering challenging performances under the pressure of a 30-day shooting schedule. Initially, she held casting sessions in Toronto (Mehta's current place of residence) and New York before finally selecting players she found in Bombay.

She first cast Shabana Azmi (*Madame Sousatzka, City of Joy*), arguably India's most revered leading lady, as Radha. "Shabana," says Mehta, "is fabulous. I think this is her best performance, and she thinks so too." The director then found her Sita while casting in Bombay. "Nandita walked into my hotel room and I took to her immediately. She was so disarming and honest, and had guts and chutzpah as well. Nandita had done small feature roles and some TV work. My review of her TV performances convinced me that she was perfect."

For the role of Biji, the elderly, bedridden mother rendered speechless by a stroke, Mehta hired her friend's mother, 75-year-old Kushal Rekhi, who was a novice to acting. "I knew the first time I saw her sitting out in her yard smoking a cigarette that she fit the role impeccably." The director did have concerns that Rekhi might be offended by scenes in which a family servant masturbates in front of Biji. "But she had a real spirit of adventure," reflects the director. "Nothing fazed her." ♦

Books in Review

by George Turner

Max Ophuls in the Hollywood Studios

by Lutz Bacher
Rutgers University Press,
378 pps., cloth, \$72

Recently, we reviewed Susan M. White's solid (if feminist-slanted) biography of Max Ophuls (1902-1957), *The Cinema of Max Ophuls: Magisterial Vision and the Figure of Woman* (see AC Nov. '95). Bacher, however, takes a much different approach, concentrating entirely on the German director's American work. This is one of the most intricately researched film books to date, containing the plunder of many archives and personal interviews with 64 of Ophuls' co-workers — directors, cinematographers, composers, production designers and film editors, among others. The tome is pricey, but well worth it for anyone interested in minute production details of four distinctive movies of the late 1940s: *The Exile*, *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, *Caught* and *The Reckless Moment*.

There's also a fascinating account of Ophuls' unfortunate involvement in the Howard Hughes-Preston Sturges fiasco, *Vendetta*, and of his work as a ghost scriptwriter and substitute director. There are many rare behind-the-scenes photos. It's an academic book, but written in genuine English with genuine footnotes.

The Dream That Kicks

by Michael Chanan
Routledge, 294 pps.,
paperback, \$19.95

Subtitled *The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain*, this revised, updated edition of a work first published in 1980 distinguishes itself amongst the several books now available on the British film industry. Chanan not only offers a chronology of the first few years of filmmaking, but rightly emphasizes the growth of the cinema a factor in the rise of capitalism. He also makes a better case than his predecessors for William Friese-Greene's role in the invention of movies.

Quotes from pioneer filmmakers capture the impact of the primitive films, such as a barker-like exclamation made by George Pearson outside a makeshift penny cinema in a former green-grocer's shop: "You've seen pictures of people in books, all frozen stiff... you've never seen pictures with people coming alive, moving about like you and me. Well, go inside and see for yourself, living pictures for a penny, and then tell me if I'm a liar!"

Much to my lament, there are no pictures of people, frozen or otherwise, in Chanan's book.

Hammer, House of Horror

by Howard Maxford
Overlook Press, 220 pps.,
cloth, \$27.95

Music from the House of Hammer

by Randall B. Larson
Scarecrow Press, 224 pps.,
library binding, \$32.50

That remarkable British production company, Hammer Films, has in recent years been the subject of several volumes, not to mention many magazine articles and one-shot publications. Hammer is most noted (read: "revered") for about 65 horror movies made from 1955 to 1972. Some were first-rate, such as *The Quatermass Xperiment*, *Curse of Frankenstein*, *Horror of Dracula*, *Revenge of Frankenstein*, and *Brides of Dracula*. The company rented houses to serve as studios, and in its balmy days was situated in a country mansion on the Thames. The budgets were strict, but a great deal of production know-how, including an imaginative use of design, cinematography (particularly color) and

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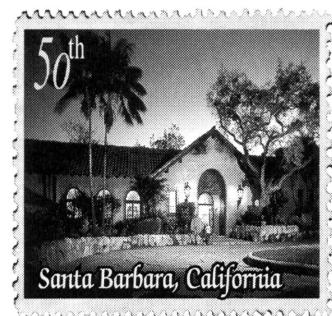


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music, transcended such problems. Lately a bumper crop of Hammer retrospectives have been published, and at least two rise above the juvenile blood-and-guts approach generally accorded the subject.

Like the recent *Hammer Films: An Exhaustive Filmography* (reviewed in *AC* May '96), *Hammer, House of Horror* touches on the entire output of the company. But as the title hints, the newer book is concerned mostly with the small studio's horror films, although it does contain a complete filmography and chronology, and adds some further items to the TV list. A handy "who's who" gives concise biographies of players and key personnel. An impressive selection of photos in black-and-white and color evoke memories of the studio's gory, er, glory days. The critiques are well-balanced and honest in discussing the pros and cons of the films.

Music from the House of Hammer concentrates on a major reason for the continuing popularity of the company's better works. The studio's musical directors — John Hollingsworth, Marcus Dods (Dodds in the book) and Philip Martell, by turns — were men of taste who recruited leading British, European and American composers. The most popular was James Bernard, whose hard-hitting music was especially suited to the *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* films. Fine scores were also contributed by Sir Malcolm Arnold, CBE; Clifton Parker, Mario Nascimbene, Elisabeth Lutyens, Benjamin Frankel, Edwin Astley (who wrote a mini-opera for *Phantom of the Opera*), and many others. Franz Reizenstein of Nuremberg wrote only one Hammer score, *The Mummy*, but it's a memorable work for orchestra and chorus. Larson offers an intelligent discussion of the composers' work, replete with biographies, a filmography and a discography. *Music from the House of Hammer* is an all-around good piece of work, but alas, there are no pictures. ♦

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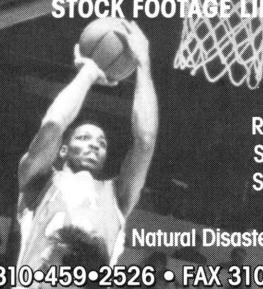
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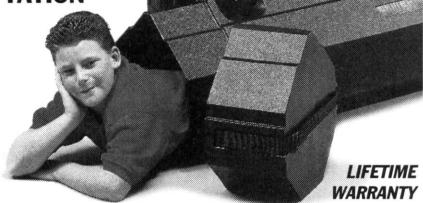
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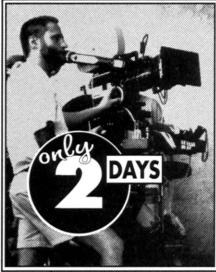
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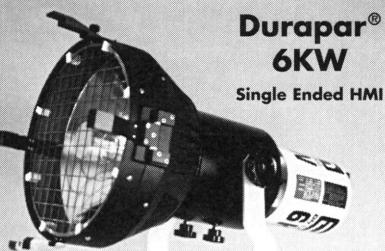
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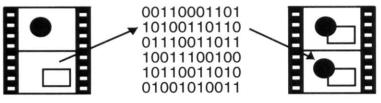
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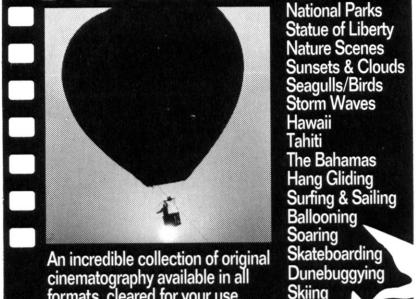
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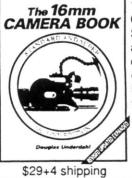
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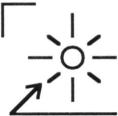
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From the Clubhouse



Seale Joins ASC

The ASC's newest member is Australian-born cinematographer John Seale, also a member of the ACS. After graduating from high school he toiled as a jackaroo (a cowboy in his native lexicon) on his uncle's sheep station outside of the desert in Queensland. Seale was so impressed by the area's amazing vistas that he sought out a career shooting *National Geographic*-type documentaries. He soon moved to Sydney and became an apprentice to esteemed director of photography Bill Grimmond. The early part of Seale's career took place at ABC-TV (Australian BBC), where he worked his way up to the position of camera operator. For years afterwards, he served as an operator for such Australian-born ASC members as Donald McAlpine and Peter James.

Seale earned his first cinematographic credit on the 1976 film *Death Cheaters*. He then photographed *Fatty Finn*, *The Survivor* and *Goodbye Paradise* before winning an ACS Best Cinematography Award for his work on *Careful, He Might Hear You*. Seale was also honored by the ACS in 1982 and 1984 with the Australian Cinematographer of the Year Award. Seale's imagery on Peter Weir's *Witness* earned him Academy Award and BAFTA nominations. He has also received a BAFTA nomination for *Gorillas in the Mist* and an Oscar nomination for *Rain Man*. His other credits include *Children of a Lesser God*, *The Mosquito Coast*, *Dead Poets Society*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *The Firm*, *The Paper*, *Beyond Rangoon*, *The American President* and *Ghosts of Mississippi*. The cinematographer's work on Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* is covered in this issue of *AC*.



Ballhaus Honored with German Camera Prize

Michael Ballhaus, ASC has received the highest accolade bestowed by the cinematographic profession in his

native Germany. On September 19, he was awarded the title of Cameraman of Honor during the presentation of the 1996 German Camera Prize in Cologne. Ballhaus was working stateside on Wolfgang Petersen's *Airforce One*, so his wife, Helga, collected the award on his behalf. Every two years (within the framework of Photokina, the world fair for imaging), the German Camera Prize is awarded in recognition of outstanding camera and editing work on current feature film and documentary productions.

The cinematographer first gained recognition working with director Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Between 1970 and 1978, they produced 15 films together, including *Satan's Brew*, *Chinese Roulette*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, *Mother Kusters Goes to Heaven*, *Despair*, *The Stationmaster's Wife* and *The Bitter Tears of Petra Von Kant*. The cameraman has also shot such German productions as Volker Schlöndorff's *Death of Salesman*, Hans Werner Geissendorfer's *The Magic Mountain* and Margarete von Trotta's *Sheer Madness*.

After firmly establishing himself in the U.S., Ballhaus earned an Academy Award nomination for *The Fabulous Baker Boys*. The cameraman has also photographed five films for Martin Scorsese: *The Color of Money*, *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Goodfellas*, *After Hours* and his personal favorite, *The Age of Innocence*. His most recent project was Barry Levinson's *Sleepers* (AC Oct. '96). In addition to his work in Hollywood, Ballhaus also teaches cinematography as a guest lecturer in Hamburg.



Samuelson Receives Honorary Doctorate

Associate member and British Film Commissioner Sir Sydney Samuelson has received an honorary doctorate from England's Sheffield Hallam University. The citation states that the *doctorate honoris causa* was

awarded for his distinguished contributions to the indigenous film and television industries over his 57-year career, his commitment to education and training, and his ability to invigorate and stimulate others to achieve their best.

"I feel extremely proud to be honored by the university in this way," remarked Sir Sydney, "because I believe that education and training opportunities for everyone are fundamental to not just film and television production but to all industries and walks of life."

Professor Judy Simons, who delivered the citation to Sir Sydney, noted that he had left school in 1939 at the age of 14 with "no qualifications whatsoever and took his first job as a rewind boy at a local cinema. The years in between mark a period of exceptional achievement: a CBE, a knighthood, the Michael Balcon Award of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, and the Academy's highest honor — the Fellowship. Sir Sydney has been, and continues to be, a trailblazer in the British film industry. He is known to be not only adept at spotting talent, but for supporting it as well. He seems to discover elastic amounts of time to devote to causes that he thinks are worth it."

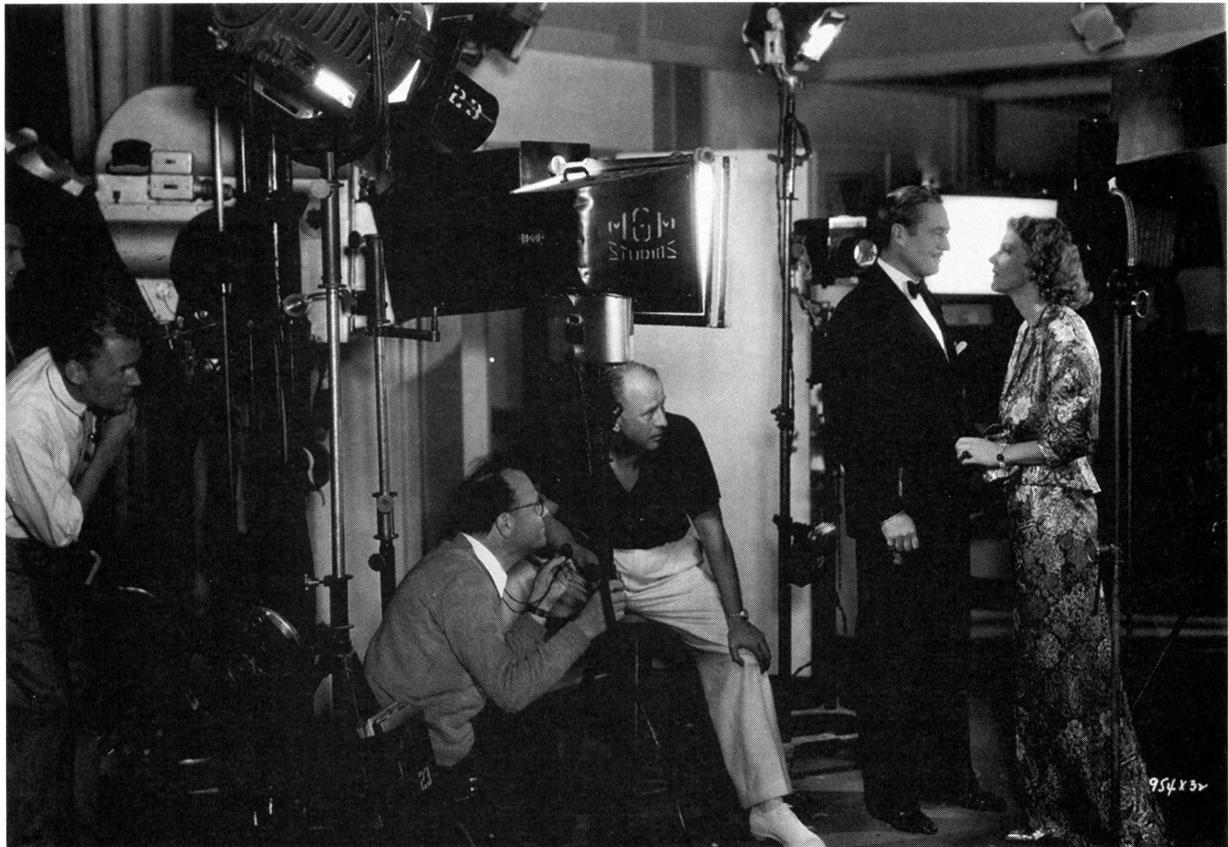
Along with his involvement in many aspects of the industry, Sir Sydney is currently providing counsel to the Policy Committee of the Northern Media School. He is also a trustee of London-based Panico Media Workshop and an ardent supporter of Britain's National Film and Television School.



Members School Cinematography Students

On the afternoon of November 12, ASC members Linwood Dunn, Mark Irwin, Victor Kemper, Willy Kurant, Robert Primes and Juan Ruiz-Anchia hosted an open panel discussion in the ASC Clubhouse for 17 graduate students enrolled in Cal Arts School of Film's Advanced Cinematography Class. ◆

Wrap Shot



At Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, in the fall of 1936, this small but highly talented group filmed a romantic two-shot for an unusual mystery/comedy picture then known as *The White Dragon*. The release title was *Mad Holiday*. The co-stars are Edmund Lowe and Elissa Landi, decked out, respectively, in tuxedo and Dolly Tree gown. Veteran director George B. Seitz is the man in the ice cream pants.

Cinematographer Joseph Ruttenberg, ASC sits on the front of a compact camera dolly designed by John Arnold, ASC. The second cameraman — he'd be called an operator today — is Herbert Fischer. Humming inside that absolutely sound-proof blimp (also an Arnold cre-

ation) is a Mitchell NC camera.

Ruttenberg had been one of the top cinematographers in New York since 1917, but his fame increased enormously when he came to MGM's Culver City lot in 1935 to photograph Fritz Lang's first American film, *Fury*. He earned 10 Academy Award nominations and took home four Oscars: for *The Great Waltz*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, and *Gigi*. His 110 credits include *The Women*, *Waterloo Bridge*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Madame Curie*, *Gaslight*, and *Invitation to the Dance*. The trailer for *Madame Curie* stated that it was "photographed by a camera that understands."

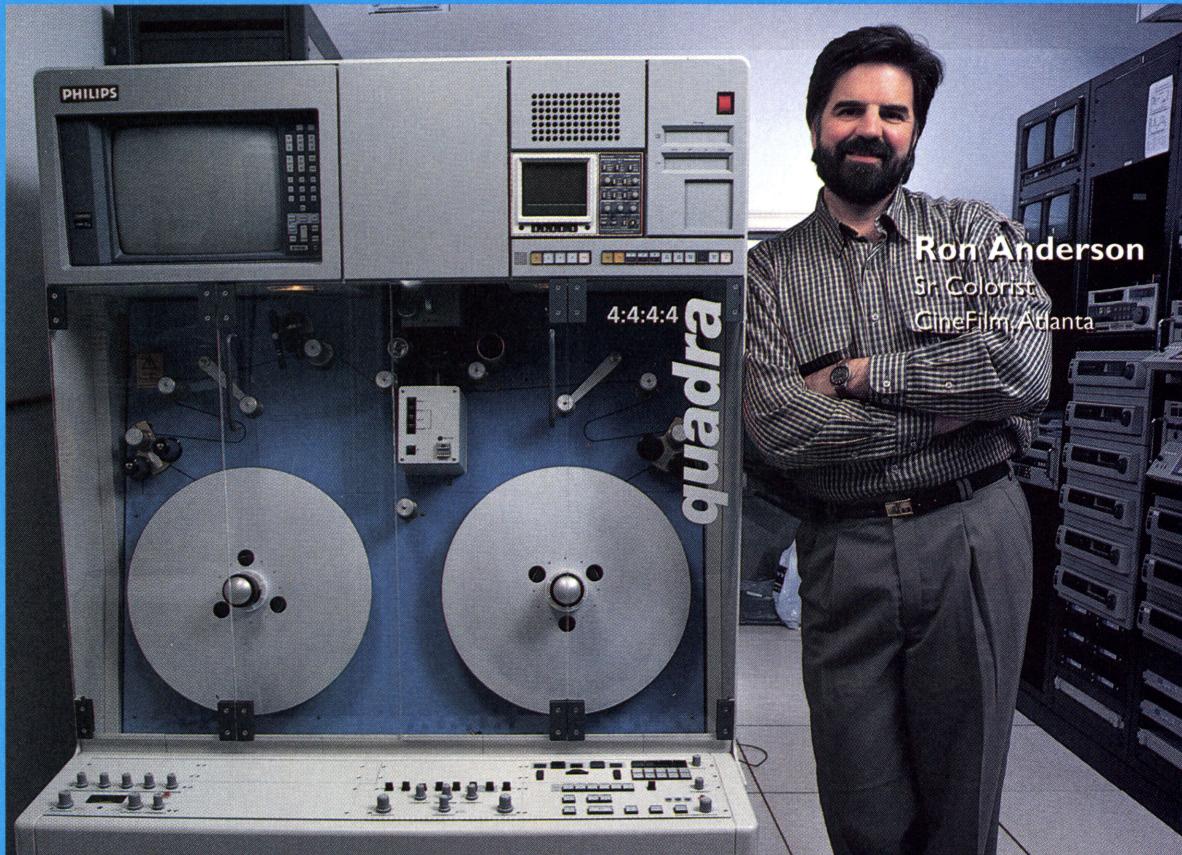
Although glamour and

spectacle were the stocks-in-trade of MGM the company also made numerous high-quality mystery films, heavily laced with romance and comedy, especially during the 1930s. The crime solvers were not the tough guys favored by other studios but smoothies like Lowe, Robert Montgomery, Melvyn Douglas, Paul Lukas and Chester Morris. The most popular were the six *Thin Man* pictures featuring William Powell and Myrna Loy.

Mad Holiday involved a mystery picture movie star (Lowe) and a mystery writer (Landi) who together solve a series of murders in San Francisco's Chinatown. Edmund Gwenn, of all people, is the unsuspected murderer.

— G.T.

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